COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLING FOR ORPHANED AND VULNERABLE STUDENTS IN MALAWI IN AN ERA OF SHRINKING COMMUNITY

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

BY

Zikani Hawkins Watson Kaunda

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Frances K. Vavrus, Advisor

September, 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to my supervisor Prof. Frances Vavrus for her patience, encouragement and guidance throughout the research process without whom, I would have not been able to complete my studies. I would also like to thank the dissertation committee for all their support and making time to accommodate me during their busy schedules. I again extend my gratitude to the following people and organizations for their support:

- Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change (ICGC) and the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development (OLPD) for their financial and academic support towards my studies which made it possible for me to pay for my studies, to live comfortably in a strange country, and conduct my preliminary and final field research. The members of staff were very ready to help whenever I needed support and such a marvel to work with.

- Prof. Nancy Kendall, for her support in reviewing my dissertation and the moral support throughout my studies and making sure that my stay in USA was not a nightmare.

- Prof. Joan DeJaeghere, Prof. David Chapman and Dr. Shirley Miske for their financial and moral support towards my studies.

- All the respondents during the research study who willingly sacrificed their time in order for me to obtain very rich information for the study.

- My 87-year-old father and 82-year-old mother for their constant question: "where are you now with your studies?" It was a driving force for me to keep on analyzing and writing my dissertation paper as much as my body could at times fail me.

- RTI, my employer for allowing me to travel to Minnesota after attending a conference which made it possible for me to discuss with my supervisor and dissertation committee my plans for defense and graduation.

Last but not least, all my cohort team members for their constant moral and professional support I received from them during my academic career while in Minnesota and Malawi.

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my wife - Morres and children Joseph, Rebecca, Shalom, Chifundo, Ruth and Jeremiah. It is also dedicated to all the guardians and all the students learning at Community Day Secondary Schools in Malawi that either lost both or one parent. They have been a source of my inspiration.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to interrogate the meanings of "community" "participation," and "community participation" concepts that are central to international development and national policy discourses in Malawi concerning Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS) and the support for orphaned and vulnerable students' (OVSs) schooling. The dissertation examines how community participation in OVS's schooling is understood by various stakeholders, and how it is understood in relation to CDSSs in particular. It also explores, from various stakeholders' views, whether and how community participation should play a role in supporting the schooling of OVSs, and how various interpretations of community participation may or may not enable OVSs to access and persist in secondary school. The study also contrasts and compares various international development frameworks for understanding the meaning of and debates about community participation and its impact on marginalized children.

This research utilizes critical and interpretivist theoretical frameworks and qualitative methods of inquiry to understand how community participation is experienced across communities and organizational scale (community, school, district, national, and international). The study is designed as a multi-sited comparative case study, in which I ground my interrogation of existing perceptions and meanings of the concepts and institutionalized relations of power related to community participation in the secondary education of OVSs in two CDSSs in the northern and southern regions of Malawi. This allowed me to critically examine international and national discourses of community participation and how they engage (or fail to engage) with diverse stakeholders' lived experiences and practices at the school and community level.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBO	Community Based Organization
CCAP	Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
CDSS	Community Day Secondary School
DEC	Distance Education Centers
DFID	Department for International Development
EFA	Education for All
ESIP	Education Sector Implementation Plan
OVC	Orphan and Vulnerable Children
OVS	Orphan and Vulnerable Students
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FPE	Free Primary Education
GoM	Government of Malawi
IDO	International Development Organization
MCCE	Malawi Correspondence College of Education
MCDE	Malawi College of Distance Education
MDHS	Malawi Demography Health Survey
MOE	Ministry of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NSO	National Statistics Office
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NAC	National Aids Commission
PTA	Parents Teachers Association

PSLCE	Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education
SMC	School Management Committee
UNAIDS	United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund

CHAPTER ONE: THE WHEELS AND LEVERS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN MALAWI'S COMMUNITY DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Introduction

> The purpose of education in Malawi shall be to equip every student with knowledge skills and values to be self-reliant and to contribute to national development. (Education Act, 2012, p. 8)

> Community participation: The Ministry of Education subscribes to the notion that *"someone's child is your child also"* and to this end, the National Strategy on Community Participation in the Management of Primary Schools has been launched, the aim being to educate and empower communities to play a more active role in education provision and accountability. (Education Sector Implementation Plan (ESIP) I 2009-2013, p. 28)

> Community participation: The establishment of Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs) has in most cases been an initiative of local communities using existing primary schools. Government through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology empowered the communities to play a more active role in the day-to-day operation of the schools. In CDSSs the community contributes materials for the construction of school infrastructure and establishes mother groups that encourage girls' enrolment and retention in the schools. (ESIP II, 2013-2017, p. 28)

International Development Organizations (IDOs) have argued for decades that the solution to improving the wellbeing of children affected by HIV/AIDS is to provide

them with education. Similarly, the Ministry of Education and Science and Technology (MoEST) in Malawi presents schooling as lying at the heart of the path to survival and thriving for orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs). Indeed, schools are thought to be an essential input, such that every child who has access to school is often described by these organizations as having a bright future (United Nations, 2008). Gachukia (2004) further argues:

> Compelling evidence is today available to link education with numerous benefits, which combine to contribute to the popular view that education is the foundation of development. This is like stating the obvious but just as a reminder: The World Conference on Education for All, held in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand, underlined the role of education for ensuring a safer, healthier, more environmentally sound world. (p. 1)

Despite this glowing and universalizing rhetoric, in which all children everywhere benefit from schooling, education in Malawi's Community Day Secondary Schools[1] (CDSSs) appears to provide varied results for OVSs. Some OVSs appear to have high achievement and successful experiences in CDSSs while others have failed to achieve and go further in school. If indeed schooling is meant to lead to bright futures whenever orphaned and vulnerable students (OVSs) have access to it, why are there such differences in OVSs experiences in CDSSs? On the one hand, this question is itself rhetorical, as any expectation that educational experiences would lead to equal outcomes across groups and places is easily disputed on the grounds of decades of national and

[1] Secondary schools are equivalent to high school in the U.S. Students that have passed standard 8 (grade 8) are selected and enrolled in these schools. Secondary school consists of Forms 1- 4, which is equivalent to grades 9 – 12 in USA.

international data as it was also found out by Demerath etal (2010). For example, participation of students in education by household income remains very uneven around the world, especially at secondary level, and wealth remains the most powerful determinant of progression to higher educational levels (Lewin, 2009).

On the other hand, this assumption can and should be interrogated, because international and national development discourses that embed and promulgate these assumptions about the generalization of positive educational effects may have significant and negative consequences for our understanding of marginalized children's experiences and the potential roles that schooling and community participation could play in supporting their wellbeing.

In Malawi, CDSSs are at the heart of many of the arguments put forward about OVCs' wellbeing, including arguments about how to save OVCs from early pregnancy, HIV infection, high poverty, social isolation, absenteeism, and academic failure (MoEST, 2009). At the same time, schooling and community participation in CDSSs varies in ways that scholars and policy makers are not generally fully aware of. The development rationale for promulgating community participation in schooling for OVCs is that communities are uniquely positioned to address local needs and concerns about schooling for the OVCs. Internationally, this argument about local participation in services is put forward by Brett, who argues that:

> Participation will only be successful in producing good organizational performance when it is operationalized through institutional arrangements which maximize the accountability of agencies to users. These arrangements must be

adjusted to the technical imperatives of the service to be provided and the levels of human and social capital in the society. (2003, p. 1)

Indeed, the assumption that schooling will serve the needs of marginalized students is tied to the assumption that community participation in their schools and their lives will assure that their needs are known and met. However, little has been done to understand *community participation* and its effects on the OVSs from the perspectives and experiences of orphaned students, their guardians, local leaders, teachers, school management committee members, education officials, and other education stakeholders in Malawian CDSSs. Furthermore, the study of secondary schooling of OVSs has received little scholarly attention other than studies of their primary education, and the relationship between community participation and the success or lack of success of marginalized children like OVSs in secondary schools remains unexplored. How do perceptions and understandings of community participation by the various stakeholders mentioned above resonate with the government's call for community participation in the establishment of CDSSs and supporting of OVSs' education? This dissertation aims to shed more light on the perspectives and experiences of students, community members and school staff concerning the driving forces or wheels for communities to participate in the education of OVSs and the levers that are required for them to effectively support the schooling of OVSs. In order to understand community participation in Malawi, the following section gives a brief historical background of community participation.

Community participation and education in Malawi

Following the very rapid and largely unplanned free primary education (FPE) process initiated in 1994, in 1998 the government of Malawi converted Malawi Centers

for Distance Education (MCDE) into Community Day Secondary Schools in order to cope with the enrollment explosions of students (ESIP, 2009-2013). This policy shift aligned with the ESIP, whose goal was to enable all to benefit from education. While the FPE initiative garnered significant international financial support, secondary level expansion was generally not focused upon by international funders, with the exception of DANIDA, who at that particular time their support agenda was focused on secondary education decentralization. Most development partners' focus was mainly on primary education because during this period it was believed that "primary education completion has higher returns as it spurs economic growth, promotes democracy and stability, saves lives and improves family well-being and serves as one of the most effective preventative weapons against HIV/AIDS) (UNFPA, 2009). However, in part because of the limited international funding available for secondary schooling, and the expanded government spending on primary schooling, the establishment of CDSSs, by necessity, mostly hinged on community participation as highlighted earlier on in ESIP II, 2013-2017 document.

Community participation almost always appears in development discourse as something positive. However, this assumption needs critical analysis as it has got its own paradoxes (Cleaver, 1999) including: what is participation in the eyes of the concerned stakeholders, who is the community, and who is an OVC? How does one's answers to these questions influence stakeholders' actions or inactions towards the educational support provided or not provided to the OVCs and how does that affect the schooling of OVSs in CDSSs? These issues are particularly pressing when thinking about OVCs, because there has long been a recognition that extended family networks

(assumed to be the thread that knits communities together) have frayed terribly over the last three decades due to HIV/AIDS, and so the capacity of these networks to provide for the survival and thriving of OVCs has been called into question repeatedly (Heymann & Kidman, 2009). Similarly, there is a growing recognition in empirically driven studies that the overwhelming majority of costs for new primary and secondary expansions in educational access and retention are being paid by families. Given these additional stressors on communities over the last two to three decades, what roles is community participation playing in securing care and resource support for OVSs, and what are the ethical implications of centering different conceptualizations of community participation in development discourse and practice?

The Introduction of the Table

The community is one of the centerpieces of current development rationales for how to help Africa, and much of the developing world, survive and thrive. Across areas of intervention, from HIV/AIDS to education to food security, international discourse focuses on how communities can come together to overcome long odds with few external resources (Heneveld & Craig, 1996; Jimenez & Paqueo, 1996; Mayoux, 1995; Pailwar & Mahajan, 2005; World Bank, 1986). Though there has long been a research and advocacy literature detailing the potential collapse of African communities in the midst of the AIDS crisis, most international development discourses assume they are nonetheless strong and can maintain and grow responses to addressing difficult lives for children and youth, even OVCs. There is limited scholarship showing that communities and community participation as a concept or as a social form may not be functioning hence be problematic when developing programs aimed at supporting OVCs; instead,

they are typically initiated with community participation at the center (Anderson, 1998; Bray, 1996; Pyor, 2005; Rose, 2003). In contrast, members of the rural communities in which this research was conducted feel the fabric of the community is crumbling while individualism, unlike collectivism, is expanding like a bush fire in the harmatan region. This sense of change is not due solely to the ravages of AIDS but to other forces as well, as captured through the notion of the "introduction of the table"[2] as depicted in an interview with one of the parents during the research:

> These days it is hard to see individuals from the village supporting children that have lost their parents. Even at clan [extended family] level, it is very difficult. You see, the introduction of the table has spoiled everything. Today it is to do with a parent and her/his children! The extended family system we used to have, where children could all join together and eat from one plate, does not exist any longer! It is this "chizungu" [being white] that has killed our traditional spirit! Actually, when you are lucky, you will find some members of the family that are directly related to the orphan children helping them. But this is very rare these days. (October, 2012)

This issue of the cultural forms and practices that different community members value is entwined with and complicates the assumption made in international development discourse and programmes, that the community evenly encompasses all members of a given geographic area, and thus that community participation will serve all

[2] Field interviews with parents described individualism that has crept into families where each father and mother cares only or his/her own biological children (see Chapter Four). This individualism is described as spreading due to a number of factors, including economic competition, health services shortages, land scarcity, and cultural changes.

members of the community, including members marginalized by age, gender, and death of caregivers. This assumption is interestingly also being made by some of the interviewed parents. Instead, as a range of researchers have noted, communities are themselves hard to define (Hillery, 1955, in Bray, 1995), as are the ways that they might participate with each other. How they participate depends, among other factors on relations of power within communities, on how policy actors understand the meaning of participation, on resource availability and distribution, and the roles that are readily available within the structures to facilitate or curtail different people's participation in decision-making (Cornish & Ghosh, 2007; Kendall, 2007; Taylor, 2009; Vavrus & Seghers, 2010; Wilkinson, 2009). In Malawi, little is known about how diverse community members understand the meaning of participation and how these understandings, coupled with structures of engagement in various activities and forums, affect their participation. In addition, there is not much research that explains the effects of the dynamic changes occurring in circles of social, economic and cultural environments on forms of community participation, thereby making it hard to determine the wheels and levers necessary for improving community participation, herein focused specifically on supporting the education of the OVSs.

Amidst all these debates and the unknowns regarding community participation, the Government of Malawi (GoM) has placed communities at the core of initiating and establishing CDSSs and addressing local needs and concerns of the OVSs in CDSSs. Yet little has been done to find out the meaning of community participation from the perspectives and experiences of OVSs, their guardians, parents, local leaders, teachers, school management committee members, education officials, and other education

stakeholders in CDSSs. Furthermore, there is virtually no research, unlike in health and HIV/AIDS, on how community participation in the form of economic, material and psychological support might contribute to the education attainment of OVSs in CDSSs.

The study's aim is to examine how conceptions of community, participation, orphan and vulnerable child influence diverse stakeholders' actions towards the education of OVSs in rural CDSSs in Malawi. In particular, I focus on the varied meanings of the term community in international development discourse and as used by participants in my study. The term "community" has well over 94 alternative definitions in a non-exhaustive list (Hillery, 1955, in Bray, 1995). Definitions vary widely by discipline, sector, and focus and purpose of a particular study. The GoM, according to the United Nations Joint Program on Aids (UNAIDS), defines community as "a group of people who have something in common and will act together in their common interest" (UNAIDS, 1997, p. 763). A number of scholars have defined community as a group of people having diverse characteristics but linked together by social ties, sharing common perceptions, and engaging in joint action in particular geographical locations or setting (Checthам, 2001). Some international development organizations have defined community as a group of people that has in common a network of shared interests and concerns, a common symbolic or physical base, an extension beyond the nuclear or extended family membership through birth and marriage, and also sees itself as distinct in some way from other similar groups (United States Agency for International Development (USAID), 1999). However, other scholars have critiqued these conceptualizations on the basis that they assume that communities are culturally and politically homogeneous social systems or ones that, at least implicitly, are internally

cohesive and more or less harmonious. Others argue that a community is generally regarded as a group of people that share common interests and are somehow socially linked together, but such a definition does not take into account social, economic, and culture power dynamics that usually exist in any group of people and which have direct bearing on cohesiveness and functionings of the group (Cornish & Ghosh, 2007; Friedemann-Sanchez, 2006; Mansuri & Rao, 2004; Pryor, 2005). In contrast, during interviews for this research, some stakeholders explained that the government and other stakeholders perceived communities as made up of (rural) primitive people, not intelligent, traditional, and those having few resources who can therefore only contribute bricks towards schools work.

These definitions were my starting point as I conducted my research on community participation in the education of the OVSs. Because of the structure of rural living in Malawi and the common use of the term community to refer to villages, I use the term 'community members' when referring to research participants for the people living in the village catchment area of each CDSS. I use the term 'extended family members' to refer to people related to a given OVS who may or may not live in the same village catchment area as the OVS. From the local and national definitions of community, I determined to target groups in my research including: OVSs, their guardians and extended family members (geographically near and far), acknowledged community leaders within the OVSs living area, teachers, and members of secondary school management bodies from a particular CDSS catchment area. It is from these groupings around each CDSS that I drew participants for my research. I wanted to explore how these very different perceptions of communities, who constitutes them, and

what they can do related to the kinds and manner of support communities provided towards the secondary schooling of OVSs.

I interrogated whether and how such groupings defined community in people's daily practices, and I constructed my research design to deliberately examine how various members from a particular area worked together, apart, against, or with each other to support OVSs' secondary schooling in the CDSS. My research, was therefore able to, in part, map inequities in the social, cultural, economic, and political relations that existed among community members, and this mapping has helped me understand how notions of community and of participation are being used to mobilize or fail to mobilize support for OVSs' secondary schooling.

The term participation also has varied definitions. For some scholars, participation is defined as the process through which people have some say in and influence on collective decisions and at the same time derive some educative value by taking part in decision-making (Beetham, 1994). In contrast, the United Nations (1981) defines participation as the creation of opportunities to actively contribute and influence the development process and to share equitably in the fruits of development. Similarly, Mansuri and Rao (2004) describe participation as the "active involvement of members of a defined community in at least some aspects of project design and implementation" (p. 11). In all of these definitions, participation is seen as an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects rather than merely receiving the outcomes of the project. However, some research participants from the rural sites interpreted participation as simply being present during meetings, even if someone does not contribute towards the conversation that takes place during the

meeting. This mode of participation was evident in the following conversation that took place with a community member:

Zikani: *Did you participate during the meeting we held yesterday?*

Community member: *You know I did participate in the meeting when you came. The mere fact that I was there during the meeting means I participated. You see, in our culture when the chief is speaking or has spoken (for he usually speaks at the end), nobody else is supposed to speak. So we had a chance to talk before he spoke and we could not debate his speech for he normally speaks and summarizes what we discussed. Even though I personally did not talk but because I was present and never questioned what my friends were saying it means I agreed with it and I participated!* (July, 2011)

Although the GoM's and international organizations' aims in supporting community participation in schooling are most often discursively linked to democratic engagement through shared management (Jimenez & Yasuyuki, 1999), some research that has been conducted on participation in African schools has revealed that community participation in most instances consists of people providing labor and other resources to schools (Rose, 2003). Research in the U.S.A. on family participation in schools indicates that modes of participation are classed, raced, and gendered, and that what schools and official bodies view as participation often embodies a middle-class idea of what participation in school should look like (Lasker &Weiss, 2003). As noted previously, it appears that, similarly, notions of participation are differentiated by geography and levels of poverty in Malawi, with poor, rural Malawians being thought of by some urbanites as "traditional," "backward," and only able to provide labor (not ideas or opinions) to schools.

In this dissertation research, I drew from the above literature to conceptualize participation in the broadest terms, and with the recognition that what is understood to be participatory by one group with power may not be the understanding held by those without power or with fewer resources. With a broad definition of participation as a starting point, I was able to design my interviews, observations and discussions in order to understand how different stakeholders understood the idea of participation in OVSs' secondary schooling and to generate an analysis of these diverse meanings that takes into account the differential positions of these stakeholders.

Just as the concepts community and participation are used in quite different manners by diverse stakeholders, the term OVC also has many different interpretations. The GoM defines an orphan as "someone that is under 18 years of age who has lost one or both parents" (GoM, 2003, p. 16). The limitation of age to 18 is problematic when it comes to educational support to orphans because in Malawi, most children at this age will still be either in primary or secondary school. The official primary school age is 6-13, but in the 2013/14 school year, 68.88% of the children enrolled in grade eight (the highest grade in primary school), were between 14 and 18 years old. In secondary school, the official age is 14-17, but there are some students, particularly more vulnerable students, who are over 25 years old and still in secondary school. In the 2013/14 school year, 61.74% of the students that were enrolled in Form 4 (the highest level in secondary school), were between 18 and 26 year plus old (MOE, 2014). Thus, the age of 18 as a cut off for children to get support will leave out many OVSs who would not have completed their secondary school education. Community members

consider OVCs who are over 18 and who are still in school to be in need of continued support (Kendall, 2010).

In contrast, some research participants described an orphan as "someone belonging nowhere" – that is, someone who does not have anyone whom she/he can claim she belongs to. Other respondents defined an orphan as any child that is still schooling in primary or secondary school and has lost one or both parents, even though most stated that the one who has lost a mother is "more orphaned" than the one who has lost a father.

In this research, the definitions provided to me by community members about different kinds of orphanhood guided me to identify youth participants in the study who could represent a broad range of recognized "types" of orphans. These included people who were still in secondary school and had lost one or both parents regardless of age, and people who were not in secondary school that had lost one or both parents and were between the ages of 13 and 18. 13 years is the minimum age for someone to be found in secondary school and 18 years is the defined age for someone to be called an adult by the government. I was particularly aware that age and gender can influence the degree of challenges orphans can face in trying to support themselves through their education, and I therefore deliberately included both girls and boys of varying ages ranging from 14 to 25 years who had lost one or both parents as an orphan.

As for vulnerable children, there are also different definitions. Some scholars like Skinner et al. (2004) have defined them as:

> A child that is not more than 18 years old that has lost either or both parents and faces material problems including access to money, food, clothing, shelter, health

> care and education; emotional problems including experience of caring, love, support, space to grieve and containment of emotions; and social problems including lack of supportive peer group, role models to follow, or guidance in difficult situations and risks in the immediate environment. (p. 16)

This definition is very different from how the GoM defines vulnerability. The GoM provides a very wide spectrum of vulnerable people. The HIV/AIDS policy, for instance, states,

> Vulnerable populations include women, children, orphans, widows, widowers, young people, the poor, persons engaged in transactional sex (sex in exchange for cash or in-kind benefit), prisoners, mobile populations, persons engaged in same-sex relations and people with disabilities. (GoM, 2003, p. 15)

In my previous community-based research on OVCs conducted in Malawi (Kendall, Kaunda, & Friedson-Rideneur, 2015), vulnerable children were defined as those children whose parents were sick or whose parents were alive but were not living with their children, children who were living with their grandparents, children who were living in situations of known physical or emotional abuse, and children that were economically disadvantaged such that they could not afford adequate food or clothing. These definitions were used as a starting point while exploring how vulnerability was understood in each community research site; as with participation, my working and analytic definitions were constructed through observations, interviews and focus group discussions with community members/stakeholders

It is important to find out how such perceptions of vulnerability facilitate or curtail the support rendered towards OVSs and their schooling, including the students'

access to and persistence in CDSSs. Focusing on the education of OVCs is critical because, as of 2010, nearly 17% of children under the age of 18 are considered to be orphaned or vulnerable while 26% of all Malawian children among the age of 15-17 are orphaned, i.e. had lost one or both parents. Further, 8% of children under age 18 are paternal orphans (their father is dead but their mother is alive); 3% of children under age 18 are maternal orphan (their mother is dead but their father is alive) and 3% of children under age 18 are double orphan (both their father and mother are dead) (Malawi Demographic Survey, 2010).[3] However, a number of such children are enrolled in secondary school and CDSS in particular. Table 1 below shows the number of orphans enrolled in CDSSs in Malawi.

[3] According to the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) that were conducted in 2010.

Table 1: Number of orphan students by sex, form, and region

Region	Form 1 Boys	Form1 Girls	Form 2 Boys	Form 2 Girls	Form 3 Boys	Form 3 Girls	Form 4 Boys	Form 4 Girls	**Totals Boys**	**Total s Girls**
North (single orphan)	951	987	989	965	835	780	751	686	3526	3418
(double orphan)	541	530	566	502	410	438	387	422	1904	1892
Total	**1492**	**1517**	**1555**	**1467**	**1245**	**1218**	**1138**	**1108**	**5430**	**5310**
Central (single orphan)	1438	1327	1391	1238	1237	1041	1025	971	5091	4580
(double orphan)	773	781	786	790	718	648	681	629	2958	2848
Total	**2211**	**2108**	**2177**	**2028**	**1955**	**1689**	**1706**	**1600**	**8049**	**7428**
Southern (single orphan)	2041	1954	2037	1965	1686	1543	1599	1449	7363	6911
(double orphan)	1285	1112	1144	1244	1069	1105	942	944	4440	4405
Total	**3326**	**3066**	**3181**	**3209**	**2755**	**2648**	**2541**	**2393**	**11803**	**11316**
Grand total (single orphan)	4430	4268	4417	4168	3758	3364	3375	3106	15980	14909
Grand total (double orphan)	2599	2423	2496	2536	2197	2191	2010	1995	9302	9145
Grand total orphans	**7029**	**6691**	**6913**	**6704**	**5955**	**5555**	**5385**	**5101**	**25282**	**24054**

Source: MOE, 2012
Note: From the table above it can be seen that there are more number of orphans enrolled in the southern region than central and north due to population difference but also HIV/AIDS prevalence rates. Southern region has a higher population seconded by central and the north being the least.

Malawi, like most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and around the world, is also striving to attain the six Education for All (EFA) goals by 2015 and to fulfill the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child

the country has signed. These declarations include the goals of making secondary and higher education available and accessible to every child; eliminating gender disparities; and ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning which in most countries requires the expansion of the secondary system (United Nations, 2008). In order to achieve these goals, as stated earlier on, the GoM aims at providing schooling for the country's one million orphaned children (out of a total general population of 13 million people) who have lost one or both of their parents, primarily due to HIV/AIDS (National Statistics Office (NSO), 2010). Ideally, the GoM HIV/AIDS policy states:

> The government shall ensure that communities and extended families caring for orphans are assisted and empowered with resources, services and skills. It shall also ensure that orphans are not denied access to education, whether by virtue of their inability to pay, their age or their gender; ensure that child-headed households are supported in order to safeguard the best interests of children; put in place mechanisms to ensure the protection of inherited property of orphans until they attain the age of majority…. (2003, p. 16)

The rationale behind the GoM's strong support for community participation is that communities are thought to be uniquely positioned to address local needs and concerns about schooling for this particular group of youths, and therefore can assure that no OVC is denied education. This is further echoed by Beard (2005) who states:

> The model of care preferred by Africans is community based because this keeps a child in a family environment in their own village and tribe. By listening to the

people of Africa, the worldwide community can learn how to work with them as they care for millions of orphaned children. (p. 105)

Beard's (2005) study came up with this recommendation as parents and organizations kept on saying that the "children" belonged to the "community" and hence could best be cared for by the community. The pros and cons of keeping children in their communities rather than orphanages are well-developed in international literatures, and include: provision of social and spiritual well-being; inculcating a sense of community belonging in children; easy identification of needs of orphans and their possible solution; allowing for strong community participation; keeping children in a culturally appropriate way; and eliminating stigma (Beard, 2005). Bennell (2005) highlights that the responsibility of supporting the education of children affected or infected by HIV/AIDS lies with the entire community and government and other organizations both at national and local level. In these recommendations by scholars and experts, community stays unquestioned. However, as noted above, the study of secondary school OVSs has received little scholarly attention, and the relationship between community participation and the success or lack of success of marginalized children like OVSs in secondary schools, particularly CDSSs, remains unexplored.

This dissertation thus examines how community participation in schooling is understood by various stakeholders, how it is understood in relation to CDSSs in particular, whether and how various stakeholders believe that community participation is or is not playing any role in supporting the schooling of OVSs in particular, and if yes, how various types of community participation enable OVSs to access and persist in CDSSs. In so doing, the dissertation attempts to unveil the wheels and levers of

community participation in Malawi today. It tries to highlight the existing environment in the families, community, and schools, and what it means for community participation to take place in CDSSs and what it will take to positively impact the schooling of OVSs in CDSSs.

Education, HIV/AIDS and vulnerability in Malawi

Malawi represents a particularly important site in which to examine the utility and consequences of current international development organization (IDO) discourse and programming that assumes that schooling and community participation will assure the future wellbeing of OVCs. Malawi is facing all of the hardships that IDOs relate to the "problem" of OVCs and the "solution" of community participation and schooling, including high AIDS rates, climate change, environmental degradation, high disease burdens of malaria and other diseases, very high poverty rates, limited natural resources, rapid urbanization, and also rapid educational expansion. However, it is perceived to have historically strong extended family and clan structures and traditional governance systems, which the government and many international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) rely upon in their programming for OVCs (World Bank, 2010).

Malawi's population is composed of 13 million people, 85% of whom live in rural areas and almost 50% of whom under the age of 18. The country is best characterized as an agro-based economy, with the agriculture sector contributing over 35.5% of GDP and over 85% of national employment (MOE, 2009). The agriculture sector's main export crop is tobacco followed by tea, sugar and coffee, but the majority of Malawians are subsistence farmers. The country has very few mineral resources, and many of its other natural resources have been depleted. For example, Lake Malawi, the

third-deepest lake in the world, is nearly fished out, and the Shire River, a potential source of significant hydroelectricity, has been so silted by forest depletion that electrical output is uneven and low (MOE, 2009). In comparison to other Southern Africa Development Countries (SADC), Malawi has the third lowest GDP per capita at US $300. In Africa this is one of the five lowest GDPs per capita, and Malawi is ranked as one of the ten poorest countries in the world (World Bank, 2010). According to the World Bank (2010), 52.4% of Malawians live below the poverty line of US $ 1.5/day; 63% of Malawians live below the US $2/day income poverty line and 21% live below the US $1/day poverty line. The natural resource-based opportunities for economic growth are slim, and internal industrial production is low and hampered by Malawi's lack of access to seaports as it is landlocked.

This being the case, the GoM states that it relies much more on human capital to produce economic returns and puts a lot of emphasis on education. This emphasis dates back to 1964, when the country gained its independence from the British. Since the first days of its independence, the GoM has promised to educate all of its populace. Despite these promises, Malawi has only recently achieved near-universal primary school enrolment. The government's drive to educate its populace from 1964 centered on developing human capital so that individuals and society derived economic benefits in employment and investments made in educating and training people (Sweetland, 1996). From 1964 onwards, most secondary schools were government-run, and the government and international organizations' rationale for providing secondary education hinged on imparting knowledge, competencies, attitudes and development skills that would enable learners to contribute to the labor market and increase the economic growth of the

country (Heyneman, 2003; Morrow, & Torres, 2000). In 1966 the government developed a policy that tied education, particularly at the post-primary level, to the (limited) demands of the labor market rather than to the (expanding) supply of students created by rapid population growth (GoM, 1973). Over the following decades, secondary schooling was mostly financed and managed by the government, and expansion of the secondary school system was limited by the country's ability to generate revenue and the many other demands on its revenue, such as building roads and providing health services. However, many would argue that the lack of expansion of secondary school was also due to the past presidents' desires to limit access to secondary schools so that it created an economically and politically elite group that it could easily politically manipulate to maintain their autocratic rule (Moulton, Mundy, Welmond & Williams, 2002).

The country's poor economic situation has led to community participation playing a central, and also diverse role in schooling in Malawi over time. The country's first president, Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda (1964-1994), told the populace during the country's first elections that he would provide education for all. Indeed, before his election, through the majority membership in the legislative council, he played a key role in shaping the 1962 Education Act, Malawi's founding education policy. The Education Act laid out multiple structures through which communities were expected to participate in local schools. This Act continued to be the country's primary education framework until 2013, when a new Education Act was passed by the legislature. Many recent educational policies were built from the 1962 Act. For example, the 2002 Education Policy states: "[A]ccording to 1962 Education Act, the School Management

Committees (SMCs) and the Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs) are responsible for ensuring community participation in managing schools" (2002, p. 14).

Since the 1962 Act, there has been a mechanism built in to all education policies that assumes SMCs and PTAs will play a key role in local school governance. The 1962 Act, like the 2012 Act, also explained how these committees will be formed: committee members for SMCs and PTAs are to be elected by parents and community leaders under the supervision of a government official (or church representative, if the school belongs to the church). From the documentation it can then be said that the government tried to institute a mechanism for fair and representative community participation in school governance since before the founding of the Malawian state. Despite these mechanisms Chaturvedi's (1994) historical study of primary schooling in Malawi from 1964 to 1994 reported that most communities did not participate in the education of their children beyond paying school fees and buying school uniforms for their children. They otherwise expected the new government to determine what would happen in schools, just as church and colonial government personnel had run primary schools in the past, with little community input on schedule, curriculum, staffing, management, or other central educational issues.

Community participation in schools began to change in the early 1970s, paralleling Banda's own shift from a democratically-elected president in a multiparty system to a one-party dictator who would rule one of the world's most effective police states for thirty years. In the 1970s, Banda introduced "youth week" with the aim of instilling a "self-help spirit" in youth and communities as a whole. During this one week a year, Banda's paramilitary forces, the Young Pioneers, fanned out across the

countryside to assure that youths and able-bodied adults were engaged in activities that developed their areas. Common youth week activities included building schools, clearing roads, and building health clinics. Even today, when one visits schools in Malawi, it is common to see plaques in schools commemorating the building of a school block during a youth week. Throughout the rest of each year, the school management committees and community members participated in construction and rehabilitation of the school infrastructure, including school blocks, teachers' houses, pit latrines, desks, and roads leading to the school.

The imposition of these self-help activities did result in an improvement in school infrastructure, but it did not relieve the challenges that the government faced in providing education to a very rapidly growing population. However, this "self-help" spirit was forced on people such that in local development circles it was being described as *thangata* -meaning slavery and was more publicly stated during the multi-party era. Indeed, during President Muluzi's (1994-2004) first election campaign, he vowed to end *thangata* for local development—a stance that caused significant problems for him later when it became clear that such local development efforts were essential to maintaining much less expanding school infrastructure.

While the central government has generally viewed community participation (in the form of providing labor) as essential for school infrastructure provision, different norms have prevailed as to what other roles parents and communities are expected to play in supporting schools. For example, during most of Banda's presidency, parents were expected to pay school fees for primary (but not university) school, and children were expected to have uniforms, books, pens, and other materials provided from home.

This stance was strongly supported by the World Bank. By the time Muluzi was elected as president in 1994, however, IDOs were strongly supportive of free primary schooling, and they supported Muluzi in instituting Malawi's FPE policy, which included removing official school fees, allowing students to attend school without uniforms, and providing pens and notebooks for all primary school students, while at the same time sharply raising prices for secondary and higher education. It was also during this time that many international and national NGOs flourished, as the government allowed them to operate freely and support education in Malawi.

Throughout these periods, parents and community members saw education as a means for attaining an opportunity to climb up social and economic ladders, but it was a hard ladder to climb as many students found it difficult to access secondary school and achieve in class which has immediately knocked out many of the poorest families and children (Chimombo, 2009). The education system did little to address the issues facing marginalized children, including girls and OVCs, and many marginalized children were never welcomed to the school, or, when they attended, they had negative experiences. For example, research indicates a lack of food for students to eat before going to school, poor clothing and common male teacher-female student relationships in primary schools that resulted in a number of pregnancies for girls, which in turn resulted in them dropping out of school (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003). Even though parents and communities faced these challenges in the education system and had few avenues for addressing them because of the centralized nature of school administration, they were expected to participate in the provision of resources towards the education of their children (MacJessie-Mbewe, 2002).

Throughout Banda's rule, community participation was defined and monitored from above. In fact, Banda himself was the Minister of Education for much of his rule, and his frequent policy dictates to schools determined much of what happened at the school level. Here, it is helpful to think about the idea of pseudo-participation where there are formal structures for participation but without people having a choice in anything other than taking part in elections for those who would serve in these structures (Rose, 2003). In the case of Malawi, labor and other materials had to be given to the school when "requested" by the government, and those in the SMCs and PTAs were limited in what they could do by the formal, sometimes capricious, and often inequitable dictates of the Ministry of Education. They just followed the commands and did what the Ministry told them to do even though it might have ended hurting some individuals e.g. asking everybody to contribute labor in moulding bricks for a school block regardless of age. However, this is not to say that community participation only took the form of pseudo-participation during this period. As Moulton et al. (2002) discuss, Banda's particular governance style resulted in real elections at the community level in many areas of the country, and those elected through these mechanisms had a fair amount of leeway in what they did—as long as it was not contrary to Banda's laws and edicts. At the community level, then, it is possible to examine and understand community participation through people's recollections of how they participated in various activities in schools during this era.

Secondary education in Malawi: A brief history

To understand how the concept of community participation evolved in relation to secondary school, it is useful to delve into the history of secondary education in Malawi. The country is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which mandates that it will fulfill every citizen's right to education (MoEST, 2008). However, its education system did not, for many years, facilitate this because of the pyramidal pattern it inherited from the British colonial period. At the time of independence in 1964, the limited number of primary schools enrolled less than half of all school-aged children for an eight-year cycle. Until 1992, all children paid a fee to enroll in primary school. A small number of elite boarding secondary schools enrolled about five percent of secondary age-eligible students in two two-year cycles, each of which culminated with a Cambridge exam (MoEST, 2008). These schools' fee was minimal (meaning little amount of tuition fees) and students received food and board while attending. Over time, a system of Distance Education Centers (DECs) developed to provide secondary education opportunities for a small percentage of (largely rural) students. By the early 1970s, the first national university was established by the government; it enrolled less than one percent of all eligible students (MoEST, 2008). This pattern, where few students were selected to elite secondary boarding schools and even fewer to university, continues to this day. For example, the 2012 education data show that in the 2011/12 academic year 4,188,677 students were enrolled in primary schools while secondary schools only enrolled 260,081 students. Teacher training colleges and technical/vocational colleges enrolled even fewer students: 12,839 and 8,356 respectively (MoEST, 2012). The country's university system (University of Malawi,

Mzuzu University, and other GoM accredited colleges) in 2010/11 only enrolled 12,203 students (MoEST, 2012).

These figures show that there are still significant limitations to accessing secondary and tertiary education for many students in Malawi. However, access to primary schooling has significantly improved since 1994, when the citizens of Malawi ushered in an era of multiparty democracy and voted in a new president for the first time in 30 years, after the 29-year reign of President Banda. The new government ushered in a new era of education by declaring FPE in 1994. One of the contributing factors to the introduction of FPE in Malawi was the Education for All global movement, which succeeded in positioning primary schooling as central to people's and countries' wellbeing, health, and happiness. For example, the EFA declaration states: "Education accomplishes such tasks as ensuring a safer, healthier, more prosperous, and environmentally sound world, while simultaneously contributing to social, economic and cultural progress, tolerance and international cooperation" (UNESCO, 2000, p. 74).

In response to the FPE declaration in Malawi, the number of children in the primary school system nearly doubled within six months from 1.8 million to 3.2 million pupils (NSO, 2008). This placed huge, and still unresolved, demands on the primary school system without a concomitant increase in funding, resulting in what is widely perceived to be a significant decline in the quality of primary schooling (Kendall, 2007). A number of international and later on established local non-governmental organizations came in to try to give support in improving education quality. Most of these organizations were funded by development partners hence their area of focus was defined by the intended goals and objectives of the available funding of the donors. For

instance, from 1993 to around 2000's, the main focus of donor was on girl's education and a number of NGOs working on education focused on girls' education. This meant that supporting OVCs, even though the NGOs might have noted the need, could not be done except when sanctioned by the donors.

Despite this decline and the lack of additional resources for schooling (the government was already spending almost 25% of its annual budget on education), soon after the declaration of FPE the new government created the CDSS system to address the unmet secondary school demands of the populace (Kendall, 2007). For example, the number of students that enrolled in secondary school after the introduction of FPE in 1994 rose from 36,550 to 46,444 even though there was no expansion in the number of elite government–run schools (MoEST, 2008). The rise in this first year was due to the fact that all of the country's DECs, secondary school-level institutions dating back to the Malawi Correspondence College of Education (MCCE) established in 1965, were converted into CDSSs. The MCCE and the Schools Broadcasting Unit (SBU), which aired school programs on the national radio, were mandated to provide distance education to primary school leavers who passed the Primary School Leaving Certificate of Examination (PSLCE) but could not secure a place in one of the few existing elite schools (Chimombo, 2009). In 1972, the two units merged to become the Malawi College of Distance Education (MCDE). The government wanted to improve the quality of education offered through distance education, and hence allowed the students to receive some tutoring by primary school teachers (and in some cases secondary school teachers) instead of only receiving radio-based tutoring (MoEST, 2002). Such sessions

were held at primary schools' premises after the primary school students had finished their classes.

The MCDEs, like the MCCEs, offered distance education to students that could not access the elite secondary schools[4]. Students that attended the distance education centers still had to have passed the PSLCE, but they were often less wealthy, rural students whose pass scores were not high enough to qualify them for a coveted position in an elite secondary schools, or whose parents could not afford to pay the fees for an elite school even when they were selected to attend it (Chimombo, 2009). However, as stipulated in the second National Education Development Plan (1985 – 1995), the government, due to lack of finances to support the MCDEs with reading materials and a teacher to supervise such centers, aimed to enroll only 9% of the primary school graduates in the MCDE centers (Chimombo, 2009).

After the introduction of FPE, many students that enrolled in primary school qualified for secondary school education, but there was no increase in the number of positions available at the elite secondary schools. The government encouraged a large number of students to enroll in MCDEs and, in 1998, it announced policy changes meant to expand secondary school opportunities by selecting students based on local catchment area instead of only by PSLCE score. These changes were designed to make secondary education not a privilege of only the urban well-to-do students but to assure that educational opportunity was regionally and geographically more evenly distributed (Chimombo, 2009). In order to accomplish this policy change, the existing MCDEs were

[4] From herein, I will use the term "elite secondary school" to refer to government-run (non CDSS) and private boarding secondary schools.

converted to CDSSs, and communities were encouraged to request that a CDSS be opened in their area whenever they felt the need and had some resources to construct school classroom blocks and teachers' houses. So many communities requested CDSSs and by 2012 there were 523 CDSSs compared to 43 elite schools (MoEST, 2012). The CDSSs enrolled 48.6% of students at the secondary school level (MoEST, 2012). In large part because of the growth of CDSSs, by 2004 secondary school enrollment had increased to 180,157 students; and by 2012 there were 260,064 students.

As with the rapid expansion of primary schooling, the creation of the CDSS system in 1998 met an undeniable demand for schooling, but its operations and management depended upon community participation in the form of material resource provision, including housing for teachers and classroom blocks. Unlike in primary schools where there were a number of NGOs supporting the government, the government historically took on full responsibility for the construction, staffing, and management of secondary schools. In contrast, the CDSS model decentralized responsibility for everything other than teacher and textbook provision to communities. This represented a radically different model for secondary school provision, one that in many ways flipped the expectations for community involvement and investment in schooling from the primary to the secondary level.

In this regard, it is worthy to note that historically, elite schools did not serve students from their geographic area, nor did they ask for resources for them, as the government fully funded these schools and the students who attended them. The parents of elite school students were also not encouraged to become significantly involved in the

school that their children attended. The government saw these schools as its own and not that of the parents. The MCCEs similarly dissuaded community participation.

The government's expectations for community involvement in secondary schooling changed dramatically after the 1994 FPE declaration. The declaration of FPE, coupled with international development education trends that favored funding primary education as it was being argued that rates of return to education were highest, and particularly for girls (Chimombo, 2009; Kadzamira & Rose, 2003), resulted in a marked shift in government funding from secondary and tertiary schooling to primary schooling. Between 1980 and 1990, educational spending in the national recurrent budget averaged 10%. Kendall (2007) and Rose (2003) report that during the same period recurrent budget funding for education dropped from 13.7% to 8.9% of government expenditures. By 1996/7 it had gone up to 26% and 1997/8 it went up to 28%. Within the education budget, the budget for basic education went up from 49% in 1993/4 to 62% in 1997 (James & Kakatera, 2000). Nonetheless, despite the tremendous increase in funding, the government could not provide enough resources to cope with per-student expenditures level at the primary or secondary levels. By 2000, the government was only able to spend $.67 per primary pupil, though 25% of the entire annual budget was spent on schooling (Kendall, 2007).

The government could not cope with the budget expenditure increases required to finance the large number of pupils entering the country's primary schools, and it was in an even weaker position to address the demands for expanded secondary schooling. In order to deal with increasing demands, the government revitalized the call for community participation, involvement of both local and international NGOs, in non-elite

primary and secondary schooling and replaced the MCCs with CDSSs in 1998. While the MCC system did not provide a mechanism for community participation, the CDSSs' mandate was directly tied to community participation.

While the GoM was galloping to try to keep pace with huge increases in the number of students enrolled in school, it was faced with another challenge – the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Malawi that left numerous students with no parents. As a way of dealing with this educational crisis for OVCs, the GoM developed a national HIV/AIDS policy that placed *community participation* in educational decision-making at its center so as to address local needs and concerns of schooling for this particular population. This policy, as stated earlier on, argues that children are best kept in and by the communities and extended families and not in orphanages. This is considered a global best practice in care for orphaned children. On the other hand, this policy also places greater responsibilities on communities to care for orphaned and vulnerable children (and for managing local schools), without funding these additional responsibilities.

Just as in its education policies, the GoM's HIV/AIDS policy placed community participation at the core of their response to dealing with the epidemic and the education and well-being of the orphans and vulnerable children. Similar to the rationale for community participation found in the education policy, the official rationale behind community participation in the AIDS policy is that communities are in a better position to address local needs and concerns for a particularly vulnerable population. That is, local programming and accountability will assure that precious resources reach the right people, and that efforts to decrease HIV rates and improve the lives of People Living With Aids (PLWA) will be as effective as possible.

At the same time, and similar to what happened in education, the government needed increasingly more revenue to meet the needs of people suffering from AIDS, children in AIDS-affected households, and children who have been orphaned by the disease as these populations expand at a rate faster than economic growth. These resources were not available, in part because of FPE and in part because of failed funding promises to support FPE internationally after the democratic elections which they had greatly supported. Political decentralization in the name of local control was and is in practice accompanied by too few government resources, which at times is supplemented by funding from donors through NGOs, to address community needs. Thus, the same logic behind community participation was and is employed in both education and HIV/AIDs policies: official hyper-community participation discourse (see Chapter Two) with a strong focus on the benefits of political decentralization to meet marginalized people's needs, while paying little attention to the lack of decentralization of economic provisions. Furthermore the word community in government policy remains unquestioned, leading to vague programming and funding strategies to effectively support orphaned and vulnerable children's secondary education. Bray (1996) indicates that when such types of decentralization processes and efforts to increase community participation occur, there are going to be issues of inequality arising. The interfacing of CDSSs and OVSs provides a rich environment to explore this assertion.

Even though community participation is central to the establishment and running of CDSSs as well as caring for OVCs, there is little known about how the government's definitions of community participation correspond to meanings of the term at the local

level, and how these terms are understood and embodied by local-level actors involved in the education of OVSs. This dissertation explores how different groups of stakeholders who are involved with OVSs education and welfare understand these terms, how community participation is practiced at the local level, and the effects of these practices on the schooling of OVSs. Such a study can inform both our understanding of how educational, non-governmental and community practices might better support OVSs and their caregivers, and of how current IDO models of decentralization and community participation are working in practice.

As with the expansion of primary schools through FPE, the CDSS expansion model has been criticized for trading quality for access, and thus creating unequal schooling opportunities in poorer and more rural areas. While resource distribution between CDSSs and elite schools is evidently unequal, and in general, students perform less well at CDSSs, there are also students, including OVSs, who do well in CDSSs, as measured by retention, completion, and scores on the JCE and MSCE. The IDOs' and government's reliance on community participation to improve OVS's educational experiences further motivates this inquiry into the roles that forms of community participation are playing in the schooling of more and less successful OVSs. A brief background on orphans and CDSSs would shed more light on why it is necessary to conduct this inquiry on community participation and education of OVSs.

Background on orphans and Community Day Secondary Schools in Malawi

Despite the active involvement of communities and the government in expanding the CDSS system, some particular challenges exist in meeting the educational needs of

OVSs. As noted earlier, the total population of 13 million people in Malawi, there are over one million orphaned children who have lost one or both of their parents. In losing both parents, the major support structures the children have are, their grandmothers and extended family networks (Demographic Health Survey (DHS), 2010). A fifth of all households in Malawi now take care of one or more orphans and 49% of these households are female headed, the majority being grandmothers and thus statistically more likely to be below the poverty line (National Aids Commission of Malawi (NAC), 2005). According to the UNAIDS 2010 global report, the HIV prevalence rates were higher in urban (15.6%) than in rural areas (11.2%), but the majority of HIV positive people are still found in rural areas since 85% of the population reside in rural areas. The high poverty rates in the country worsen the situation for those caring for AIDS-affected family members and makes additional children in these households economically vulnerable. Ainsworth and Filmer (2002), after analyzing data from 22 DHS surveys in Sub-Saharan Africa, concluded that patterns of enrollment of orphans in school were country specific, but the schooling outcomes for individuals was very much predicted by the degree of relatedness of the orphan to the household head. The more distant the relationship between household head and the orphan, the less likely it is that the orphan will be enrolled in school. Actually the MDHS (2010) indicate that 19% of children under 18 are not living with biological parents.

Existing research indicates that in Malawi and in other countries with widespread HIV epidemics, OVCs are less likely to enroll, complete, or succeed academically in primary school (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003). There are many hypotheses about why this might be the case, including the amount and type of support that OVCs receive for their

schooling in their home and in their communities, the psychosocial effects that they experience from losing parents and other family members, and the responsibilities that they are expected to take up in their families. Despite the particular hardships that OVCs face in getting to and staying in school, there is evidence that schooling is particularly important for OVCs; OVCs are themselves more likely than other children to become infected with HIV, and schooling is the only "social vaccine" that appears to have an effect on these later outcomes (Minujin, Vandemoortele & Delamonica, 2002). The GoM and a number of international organizations have argued that Education for All and gaining control over the HIV epidemic are mutually dependent for assuring educational access and the future success of OVCs (Kendall & O'Gara, 2008; UNICEF, 2003;).

The government's focus on community participation as the solution to OVC's schooling problems has been questioned from a number of angles. For example, Rose (2003) argues that community participation might lead to the further marginalization of OVCs by asking guardians to contribute resources towards the school, which they cannot afford, thereby causing most of the OVCs not to enroll and remain in school. Kendall (2007) argues that placing responsibility for OVC's education on poor families and communities may result in their continued marginalization because of lack of redistribution of resources. These arguments hold only on the population level, however, and do not help explicate the quite significant differences existing amongst orphan students learning at CDSSs in terms of their enrolment, persistence, and achievement. CDSSs thus offer a site to emphatically examine the contestations between the government's claim that community participation is best able to transform the

educational opportunities of OVCs and the arguments that decentralization of resources and responsibilities further marginalizes OVCs.

Though it is not uncommon for studies of family and community involvement in African schools to conflate participation with family and community investments in school (Rose, 2003), this study steps back and examines the notion of community participation itself. Community participation is widely regarded as a best-practice in international development work for ensuring civic engagement and attainment of democratic and accountable process (Kendall, Kaunda & Friedson-Rideneur, 2015). However, few studies have considered the relationship between community participation and the enrolment, retention, and experiences of marginalized children like OVCs in schools, and particularly CDSSs.

One plausible explanation for the CDSSs' ability in enrolling and retaining some students is that, by the government's design, they involve the community in their establishment and management and at least theoretically, they are government-run but community-managed. For instance, for a CDSS to be established, a cluster of communities is supposed to identify the need for a secondary school in their area. In most cases, a cluster includes the communities in the catchment areas of about five contiguous rural primary schools. The communities from the cluster meet to discuss the need for a CDSS and then apply through district education officials to receive support for the CDSS from MoEST. The government normally accepts the communities' application for a CDSS once the community has constructed a school classroom block and a teacher's house, or promises to build a school classroom block within two years after opening the school while they utilize primary school classroom blocks. This initial

community investment is used as a proxy for community interest in, support for, and willingness to manage the CDSS. After this process, the government sends in its own teachers and manages the school, though the community is expected to be involved in the management through school committees and parent teachers association.

However, this official process of establishing a CDSS is sometimes not followed at all. For example, one of the sampled CDSSs in the northern region, Mabuti CDSS, in Mzimba district was established following political manipulation as people found ways of utilizing government resources through politicking. Field interviews with various key informants revealed that Mabuti CDSS was established following the visit by a state president to Mabuti primary school. During the president's rally he informed the community members that he was going to build more primary school blocks at the school. After more school blocks were constructed, a number of school blocks remained idle. Some members of the community asked the Member of Parliament to approach the District Education Manager so that the government could open a CDSS at Mabuti which could utilize some of the school blocks that were not being used by the primary school. Even though the government opened the CDSS in some of the retired primary school blocks, there was need for more classrooms and teachers' houses. In response, the community members from the surrounding primary schools moulded more bricks and constructed more classrooms and teachers houses. By the time I was conducting my research, some community members from surrounding primary schools were constructing teachers' houses.

In addition, through interviews in the southern region, I learned that Londola CDSS was established following the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP)

request for a secondary school in order to deal with the problem of the large number of students that were not being selected to conventional secondary school due to limited space at such secondary schools. The time for this request coincided with the introduction of FPE and the government's call for the communities to request for CDSSs wherever there was some existing infrastructure, i.e. school blocks and teachers' houses. The chiefs from the surrounding primary schools mobilized all parents to mould bricks and constructed some infrastructure like teachers' houses and school blocks for the secondary school. The government provided some grant money to construct more classroom blocks using the bricks that the communities moulded. After the CDSS was opened, the government selected 50% of the students to go to the school from the surrounding primary schools (regardless of their faith religion) and 50% was selected by CCAP from their faith religion.

The establishment of these two CDSSs shows that the bureaucratic process for creation of the CDSSs, and the imagined community that supported their founding, were much slipperier than the policy would suggest. On the other hand, there is more that goes into running these CDSSs as students and parents/guardians are expected to provide more resources.

At CDSSs, students pay approximately US $100 tuition fees per year, compared to $400 at elite government-run schools. Unlike at elite secondary schools, students in CDSSs also pay a development fund fee that is utilized to manage the school and to construct infrastructure like teachers' houses, pit-latrines, and classroom blocks. The amount of the development fund to be contributed per child varies from one CDSS to another and also from one child to another depending on the needs of a particular school

and the ability of a child to pay the designated amount. Despite this additional fee, the total cost for a student at a CDSS is generally lower than at an elite secondary school.

CDSSs are different from conventional secondary schools in Malawi in that they are less expensive and do not require the students to be away from home for long periods of time. CDSS students are supposed to commute daily from their homes, which in principle are usually supposed to be close enough to the CDSSs and not require transportation fees. However, during the field research I found some students travelling more than 20 kilometers to and from CDSSs. Despite the lower costs, CDSSs are still unaffordable for most students and families on or below the poverty line of US $ 1.5 per day (Chimombo, 2009), and they require significant student and community investment, including an initial support for the school and investment in infrastructure, and long-term support through infrastructure fees. Most CDSSs have fewer resources (e.g., have no science laboratories, examination papers, chairs, etc.) such that parents and students have to buy their own chairs and paper for the examinations, thereby increasing burdens on the community.

Conventional ("elite") secondary schools cost more in terms of upfront costs for students. They are viewed as less useful for OVCs because of this cost, and because they require students to live away from home, while many OVCs have extensive family responsibilities and cannot move away from siblings and caregivers. On the other hand, CDSSs are deeply under resourced by the government, which means it is much more difficult for students to achieve well, particularly in courses like science, which are supposed to require labs. Moreover, CDSSs often pose "hidden costs" to students and their families through additional fees of various sorts, and the long distances that some

students have to travel. There is also an expectation that communities will provide long-term managerial and infrastructural support. However, the large catchment areas covered by CDSSs, coupled with the historical practice that communities and families were expected to stay separate from secondary school management, have made it less clear how communities can and will be involved in the CDSSs.

The area of research study

This study consists of a multi-sited comparative case study of two CDSSs which were purposively selected based on the discussions that I had with divisional education officials. Purposive sampling was done based on some predetermined characteristics (Patton, 2002), in this case the dominant kinship practices in the districts. One CDSS was in the southern region and the other was in the northern region of Malawi, which have distinct educational histories, OVC demographics and HIV/AIDS rates, socio-cultural practices, and economic differences (see Figure 1). The two CDSSs were selected from two districts, Mzimba and Zomba, which have different kinship systems. Malawi is predominantly patrilineal in the northern region and matrilineal in the southern region, and kinship patterns have a bearing on how households and communities cope with orphanhood, inheritance, community participation and education of orphans (Peters, 2008; Pyror, 2005; Streuli & Moleni, 2008). It is generally believed that patrilineal kinship provides more space for male OVCs to access and enroll in school as they are regarded as belonging to the paternal village where as matrilineal kinship provides more space for female OVCs to access and enroll in school as they belong to the maternal village (Kendall, 2008; Streuli & Moleni, 2008). This originates

from the assumption that the male OVC in patrilineal kinship belongs to paternal lineage and is therefore cared for by the relations of the deceased father while the female OVC from the same patrilineal kinship is usually regarded as not belonging to this lineage as she will get away from the village after she gets married. In the case of matrilineal kinship, the female OVC is the one that belongs to the maternal lineage and hence is cared for by the relations of the deceased mother while the male OVC is said to belong to where he will get married. These assumptions are expected to have an effect on the education support provided to the male and female OVCs from these two different areas (Moleni, 2008). Mzimba and Zomba districts follow patrilineal and matrilineal kinship structures respectively and therefore allow for a comparison of the effects of these kinship patterns of OVSs' schooling and community engagement in CDSSs.

However, there have been strong responses to these assumptions on patrilineal kinship and OVCs access and enrolment in school, including research on matrilineal areas that indicates that girl children face more positive support for education and less violent relationships (Peters, Walker, & Kambewa, 2008, 2007). There is also research indicating that care patterns for OVCs often no longer follow "traditional" patrilineal/matrilineal formations (Cheney, 2015). Foster and Williamson (2000) observed that the foster care of orphans is most often provided by elderly grandmothers from either side of the lineage with little or no assistance from other family members, especially in the matrilineal kinship. The numbers of elderly people who are now taking full responsibility of the care and upbringing of orphaned children in Malawi is alarming. For instance in 2001, 15% was the estimated HIV/AIDs prevalence rate amongst adults whose ages ranged from 15-49 with annual deaths caused by the

epidemic estimated at over 80,000 and those dying left their children with the grandmothers (NAC, 2003; Help Age International, 2003). According to Ainsworth and Filmer (2002), by 2001 more than one fifth of Malawi's orphaned children were living with grandparents, especially grandmothers. The grandmothers are left alone due to the death of their husbands or are divorcees. This is more pronounced in the southern region due to HIV/ADS prevalence rates and numerous divorces. The situation is very problematic as these grandmothers are often very poor and fail to provide for the OVSs thereby making the OVSs fend for themselves.

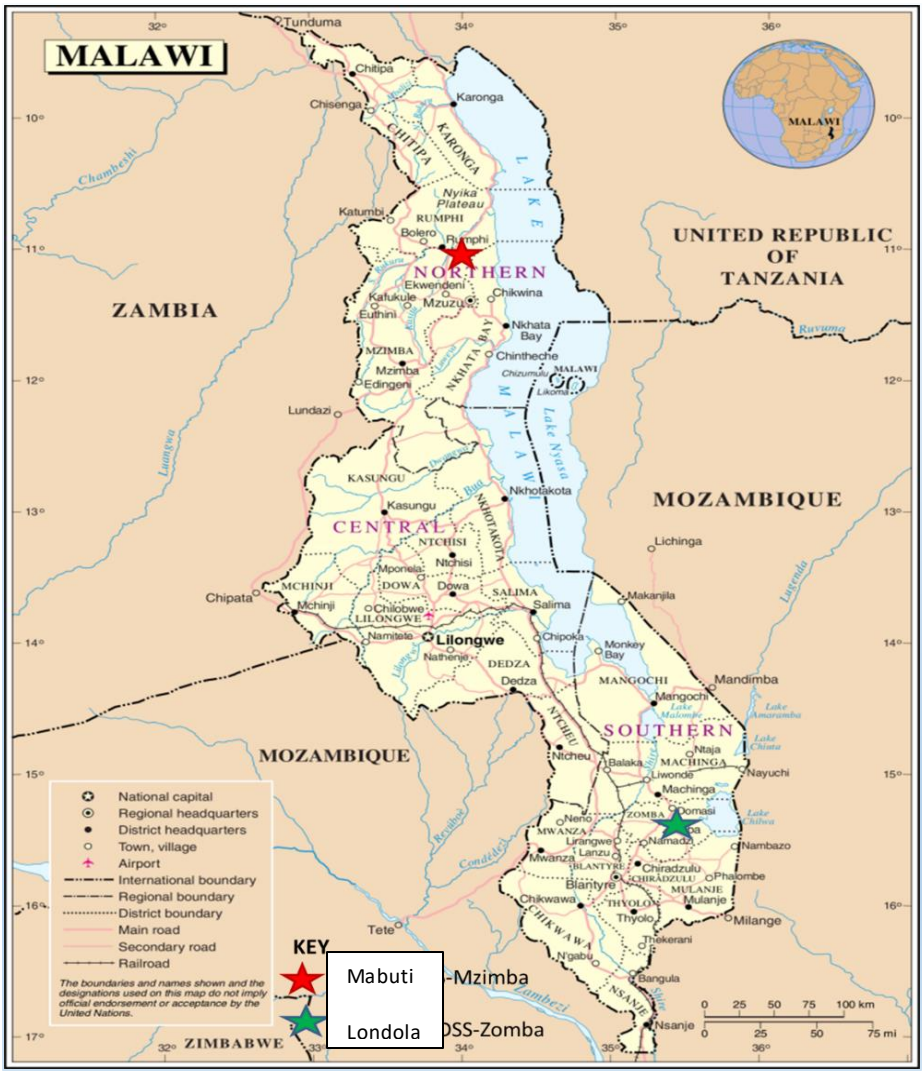
Tackling kingship in this dissertation is useful in helping to generally map the scope of household arrangements in Malawi which is just like any other heavily AIDS-affected countries in the region. There is a growing literature on kinship which does capture the changes in land tenure that has come about because of social-economic and commodification of land which has ended up shaping, reshaping and transforming the existing social and cultural ideas, practices and relations (Peter, 1998). As Peter (1998) said,

> As land becomes a property or a commodity, so we see developing a very different sense of "belonging" from someone belonging to a place to a property belonging to someone; in short, a shift from inclusion to exclusion (p. 360)

However, the literature lacks details on the deepening rifts between and within kin-based expropriation of land; an analysis that clearly tells who benefits and who loses from instances of negotiability in access to land due to the economic, social and political changes that are taking place (Peter, 1998). It will be interesting to see whether and how

kinship and land ownership has any relevance in the interpretations of concepts like orphan, vulnerable, community and participation by the members of the society? How does this affect the ways rural orphaned and vulnerable children are being supported in their daily lives and in their education? The dissertation highlights some of the dynamic changes that have occurred in the society, the ways that these changes interact with and affect the various interpretations that stakeholders attribute to such concepts, and the resulting support (or lack thereof) for OVSs secondary schooling.

Figure 1: Map of Malawi showing the selected research sites



I held discussions with government education officials from Mzimba and Zomba districts to purposively sample one CDSS from each district that was representative of the district's patrilineal / matrilineal kinship pattern. I also looked at other factors: being located in a rural area but accessible; having classes from Form 1 – 4 (Grade 9 – 12); having some orphaned students enrolled at the school; and being originally established through community participation. Such a CDSS could provide rich data on perceptions and meanings about community participation and how orphaned and vulnerable students enrolled and persisted at the school.

Organization of the study

In this introductory chapter, I have discussed the concept of community participation and education in Malawi and the contestations around the meanings of community participation. I have also defined key concepts for this study and provided background on the education, HIV/AIDS and vulnerability situation in Malawi, and how these concepts and context led me to the research questions that I intend to answer in this study. Briefly have I also discussed the history of secondary education in Malawi and laid out the background on orphans and CDSSs in Malawi as well as described key comparative aspects of the sites where I conducted the research. Throughout this introductory chapter I have explained the significance of conducting research on community participation in the education of OVSs attending CDSSs. The remainder of the dissertation is described below.

In Chapter Two, I will discuss the different theoretical frameworks to the study of community participation that have shaped my research; Chapter Three will focus on

research design and research methodology. Chapters Four and Five will present my research findings and data analysis from the two research sites. This will be followed by the final chapter, in which I discuss scholarly and policy-related conclusions from this study and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS TO UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AS A DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

Introduction

One of the objectives of the research study is to better understand how community participation operates by interrogating existing social relations, issues of power, and institutionalized contradictions in the communities in which I conducted research. This chapter is aimed at detailing the theoretical frameworks that guided this dissertation in understanding community participation in Community Day Secondary Schools and the education of OVSs in Malawi. Firstly, this chapter discusses the critical interpretivist theory in relation to policy studies. The general discussion on critical interpretivist theory, which is the main theoretical frameworks that informed my research, describes how this framework fits into interrogating community participation and its intended design of supporting OVSs through the policies that are formulated by the various governments. Theoretically, critical interpretivist development theories served this purpose well, by providing a set of theoretical stances that helped to reveal the assumptions underlying official development discourses about education and the care of OVCs (e.g., Ferguson, 1990; Escobar, 1996), while at the same time providing the theoretical tools to recognize the need for research that explores different actors' and institution's standpoints concerning the same. I then briefly discuss how policy has been defined by different scholars, followed by critical studies of community participation policy. Under this section I critically look at the three main strands that emerged in studying community participation policy i.e. hyper-community participation advocates; community participation skeptics and community participation transformation scholars. My concern in identifying these literatures was to develop a set of theoretical tools that

could help me understand current international development education discourses, policies, and programs, which constitute, from the top-down perspective, the field in which OVSs schooling and secondary schooling in Malawi lie. At the same time, I needed theoretical tools that helped me understand OVSs daily practices—that is, bottom-up theories of engagement, interaction, and meaning. Finally, I briefly review the development discourse and community participation that was also discussed in the previous chapter. The main objective of this chapter is to situate the dissertation within the critical interpretivist theoretical frameworks that guided my research.

Critical interpretivist theory in the study of policy

Critical interpretivist theory

In order to interrogate existing social relations, issues of power, and institutional contradictions in the operation of "community participation" in Malawi, my research was informed by critical interpretivist theory. Interpretivist approaches recognize that "Knowledge is culturally and historically contingent, serves particular interests and purposes, and is laden with moral and political values" (Howe, 1998 p.17). Wandel (2001) defines critical theory in a broad, historically unspecified sense as:

> A political commitment to delineate structures of domination and power in a society, to locate points of resistance to these structures, together with outlining theoretical strategies according to which this resistance is to be carried out. This commitment is grounded in a belief that there is a measure of injustice and asymmetrical power relations in society and that this situation is ethically indefensible. (p. 381)

Critical theory thus provides a conceptual framework for conducting an interrogation and explanation of when and how power is exercised to dominate and shape the consciousness of diverse actors, including marginalized ones (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Furthermore, critical theory helped me to analyze competing power relations between groups and individuals and raise questions about any injustices arising from policies or reforms that are being implemented (Elliot, 2009). Essentially, critical theory problematizes taken-for-granted beliefs, norms, and practices that (re)produce inequity (Ball, 1994), for example, the belief that creating a policy that requires community participation will lead to improvement in education quality, access, and equity by empowering local actors. A critical framework raises questions like: How might community participation further marginalize or disempower some community members? How do various modes of community participation and cultural practices interact to increase the labor of some community members, such as grandmothers and other women, in the name of community participation? What needs to be done to transform the policies or practices that increase injustice or that fails to address it? These questions were central to my being able to understand government community participation policies as acts of power that affect relations among community members, and to explicate how these acts of power actually impact CDSS-going OVSs and their educational experiences.

Policy

The definition of the term policy is as varied as the people trying to define it. For instance, De Coning (2000) defines policy as "a statement of intent that articulates basic principles to be pursued to attain specific goals and action. Policy therefore interprets the

values of society and is followed by pertinent project and program management actions" (p. 11). His definition assumes that there is a clear and homogeneity or consensus in these values between a society's goals, the policies that are created, and the projects put in place to realize the policy. Unlike De Coning, others state that power dynamics play a significant role in policy formulation and implementation, and therefore policies represent these dynamics, not a "society's" goal (Stone, 1997). Stone, for instance, does not assume cohesion among all members of society, just as poststructural and critical authors do not assume that communities are homogeneous. Similarly, Easton (1953) defines policy as "the authoritative allocation through political process of values to groups or individuals in society" (p. 129), which is different from De Coning's view in that it does not provide an alignment of policies created with society's goals and the projects created.

Sutton and Levinson (2001) call policy "a symbolic expression of normative claims worked into a potentially viable institutional blueprint" (p. 2). Their definition indicates that official policy becomes an institutionalized document that is to be accepted as a norm or rule but that the contents of such a document are applied, changed, or contested by various actors, including, in this research, by community members. Definitions like Stone's and Sutton and Levinson's help to explicate relations of power and their effects on policy/discourse at every stage of the "policy process". They are useful to me because my research aims to understand participants' perspectives on and experiences of community participation both in relation to as it is officially stated in IDO and government policy and as participants articulate and negotiate the meaning of participation in practices associated with schooling OVSs in CDSSs.

From the official definitions of community, participation and orphan provided by government in Chapter One, when compared with those by IDOs, it can be inferred that community participation and HIV/AIDS policies developed by the Malawian government reflect both international norms and development "buzzwords", and power dynamics within and among state and IDO actors. The policies are developed based on the assumed definitions thereby will achieve the intended results. The policies are meant to achieve specific goals/objectives in part by impacting people's social values and daily practices. Policy implementation takes many forms in practice (and these forms will reflect multiple power dynamics, goals, and values) and can foment inequalities and marginalization in society, even when policies' goals may be the opposite.

Many definitions of policy, including Stone's and Easton's, are concerned with what we can call official policy—that is, the end product codified by those in power (in this case, the official CDSS and HIV/AIDS community participation policies). While such perspectives are useful in thinking about how official policies come to be and what they attempt to do, as many researchers have shown, in practice there are a multiplicity of interpretations of official policy, and there are an almost inexhaustible number of potential results of these policies (Shore & Wright, 1997; Sutton & Levinson 2001, Vavrus, 2003). The effects of official policies are not straightforward, nor are the power dynamics that shape these results. This reality led me to identify a critical interpretivist approach to understanding policy as central to my research.

Critical interpretivist theory and policy

Critical and sociocultural scholars of policy hold that discourses, structures, processes and interactions have a bearing on the social construction of meaning and

political and power relations that are central to the formation and implementation of policy. Gale (2001), contributing to the fields of critical policy analysis, critical policy scholarship, and policy sociology, proposes three methodological approaches to explain and explore matters of policy using a critical lens. The three approaches are: policy historiography (which has to do with the social structures and cultural configurations of different historical moments) (Kincheloe, 1991), policy genealogy (that seeks out discontinuities where others found continuous, linear policy development), and policy archaeology (that looks at the conditions that make the emergence of a particular policy agenda possible). These approaches were relevant to my research because I sought to understand if and how community participation was currently operating in support of the secondary school education of OVCs as described in national policy; if and how community participation operated in supporting secondary schooling for OVSs in the past even before the establishment of a CDSS; how any concerns about various modes of participation were understood and addressed; and whether and how such findings revealed anything about who was and had been advantaged or disadvantaged by official policies that emphasize community participation as a mechanism for improving the lives of OVCs. To explore this last point, I needed to ask how it became possible for IDOs and the GoM to reach the same understanding about community participation as the obvious path for securing more transparent and better governance at the local level, and a greater capacity to address the rights and needs of OVCs—some of the most vulnerable people on the globe.

Critical interpretivist approaches to the study of policy allow researchers to pay close attention to the frameworks of cultural meaning that individuals use to interpret

their experience, such as their experiences with community participation, and to generate social behavior (Sutton & Levinson, 2001). Critical social theory, broadly conceived, is multidisciplinary in nature and has as its goal the emancipation of knowledge and its use (Leonardo, 2004), in part through the questioning of assumed truths. The research described in this dissertation aimed to question assumptions made by international and national actors and institutions about the relations among OVSs, CDSSs, and community participation in Malawi. Sutton and Levinson (2001) state that sociocultural approaches can produce "locally informed, comparatively astute, and ethnographically rich accounts of how people make, interpret and otherwise engage in the policy process" (p. 4). Interpretivism emphasizes thick description of daily cultural and social practices so as to accurately describe and analyze the observed social actions and assign purpose and intentionality to these actions (Denzin, 1989; Ponterotto, 2006). These approaches helped me to illuminate the diverse understandings that emerged from community participation policies and practices within each CDSS community catchment area and across these areas through to national and international discourses. Interpretivism also helped to orient me toward the study of the lived experiences of community participation for OVSs. This was achieved by focusing on the circumstances, meanings, intentions, strategies, motivations and the often complex web of relationships among the participants that characterized community participation in practice (Geertz, 1973; Schwandt, 2000; Someck & Lewin, 2006).

Critical interpretivist research about the everyday lives of OVSs—including but not limited to the role of policy in their lives—enabled me to map and understand the access and persistence of OVSs in CDSSs, and the relationship of their schooling

practices to practices that various actors associated with the notion of community participation. By utilizing ethnographic research methods to study policy as everyday practice, I engaged in and chronicled people's experiences as they engaged with diverse understandings of community participation and social support for OVSs. I attempted to reconstruct the cultural logics and embedded meanings of various actions described as community participation, as well as the daily practices that constituted OVSs' experiences of support (or lack thereof), and their ideas about the effects of this (failure of) support on their schooling, their futures, and their social roles and status.

Critical interpretivist theory in the study of policy also offered a framework through which to analyze the relations of power i.e. how various groups exerted control over the others that shaped definitions of community participation, the modes of engaging in such participation, and the intended and unintended outcomes of participation for community members. This framework allowed me to understand OVSs as both marginalized members of a community (and the state and the globe), and as actors who engaged directly with other community members and schools in an effort to secure their survival and thriving. I examined the role of CDSSs in this struggle, mapping and trying to understand the limitations that OVSs faced and the roles that various types of community participation played in improving or failing to improve these limitations. However, power is not static; it is always circulating and constantly shifting. I therefore tried in my research as well to investigate when and how OVSs, their experiences, and the social roles they are assigned worked to help secure their wellbeing and their connections with others.

Critical theory and development discourse

Discourse has been defined in many ways by various scholars. Peet and Watts (2004) define discourse as a language that certain institutions utilize to express certain points, while Escobar (1996), drawing on Foucault, views discourse in terms of power and knowledge and examines how such impacts the way certain things occur in the society / individual. While Escobar and Ferguson's (1990) early work argued that development discourses were almost unrelated to development practices, more recent critiques (Gardner & Lewis, 2001) have argued that development discourses are more heterogeneous, reflect complex colonial histories, and shape development practices and the behavior of people, groups, and institutions, albeit inconsistently and with diverse outcomes (Shore & Wright, 1997; Sutton & Levinson 2001, Vavrus, 2003).

Community participation has emerged as a key term in development circles during the past two decades. It was initially introduced around 1970's by critics of existing top-down development approaches, with a liberatory aim of empowering countries and communities to carry out their program activities but this changed to 'do it by yourself' by around 1980's as neoliberalism flourished (Cornwall, 2010). Critics have argued that its influence and prominence in international development discourses strengthened as first structural adjustment policies, then poverty reduction strategies, and now social adjustment (Bradshaw, 2008) policies have continually weakened states. As such, though the roots of the concept were progressive, it has more recently been critiqued as coopted by IDOs and some governments (Cooke & Kothari, 2001) and as a term that has become "infinitely malleable" (Cornwall & Brock, 2005) in its discursive uses and practical applications. These critiques are important for making sense of when,

how, and why community participation is evident in international and national development discourses, when and how it enters into development programming and funding, and what the effects of these entrances might be on OVSs' lives.

The discourse of community participation is important in Malawi because it has transformed the ways that GoM and IDOs talk about who is responsible for OVCs' wellbeing, and for educational opportunities for marginalized children—which, by GoM definition, include rural children and OVSs in particular. A focus on this particular development discourse will shed more light on how the lives of OVSs are affected by the meaning of community participation, the policies, and programs that put community participation as one way of supporting and taking care of OVSs' lives. Research on the consequences of community participation as a development discourse will provide insight into how various terms including "community", "participation", and "orphan" shape development responses to one of the greatest ethical challenges of the 21st century: how to support the survival and wellbeing of a generation of AIDS-affected children coming of age in environments with few adults, few material resources, growing environmental instability, and multiple threats to their survival and thriving.

With this theoretical background in mind, I now move to examining three specific views on community participation held by scholars in international development. Borrowing from Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, and Perraton (1999), I characterize the three approaches to understanding participation that as: "hyper-community participation advocates," "community participation skeptics," and "community participation transformation scholars". This way of conceptualizing the different approaches helped me understand the layers of community development

discourse and practice that I was mapping through a critical interpretivist approach to studying OVSs in CDSSs.

Three approaches to understanding community participation

Hyper-community participation advocates

Hyper-community participation advocates and understands community participation through the lens of development efficiency and effectiveness. This approach views community participation as an essential aspect and outcome of the decentralization of authority in the economic, administrative, and political arenas. The approach does not take into account the challenges that may arise due to decentralization but that it unproblematically leads to the full and equal participation of community actors. In the education arena, it is assumed that participation positively affects the quantity and quality of education for all. Many, though not all, scholars in this group espouse a neoliberal view of education, in which public education is viewed as best managed outside of the hands of the central government (Morrow & Torres, 2000). In poor countries, there is little private market for primary schooling because of high poverty levels, and so decentralization came to be viewed as a mechanism for moving schooling out of the control of the (assumedly inefficient) state, and into the hands of people that need the school, the "consumers."

With the introduction of FPE, there was an outcry on the quality of education that was provided to learners in most government schools and there was need to do something (Kadzamira, & Rose, 2003). By the early 2000s, there was a global shift toward IDOs promulgating decentralization policies in education, and governments

adopting such policies. Indeed, by 2001, the GoM had begun to officially decentralize the education system. Astiz, Wiseman and Baker (2002) explain this global trend and its official framing as follows:

> These neoliberal policies, which decentralized and privatized school systems, claim the following virtues: (1) being democratic, efficient, and accountable; (2) being more responsive to the community and to local needs; (3) empowering teachers, parents, and others in the education community while improving the effectiveness of school reform; and (4) being able to improve school quality and increase funds available for teachers' salaries through competition. (p.70)

This paradigm shift in public policy also promoted institutional globalization that paralleled neoliberalism through a growing uniformity in the institutional and regulatory framework that stressed decentralization across countries. As a consequence, educational reforms across many nations championed a model of decentralized educational governance as the standard practice. Because the state (central government) is viewed as inefficient, local management (at school or district level), it is assumed, will improve 'efficiency' of resource management and the 'effectiveness' of educational inputs. Thus, these scholars contend that community participation will increase school attendance, school effectiveness, and pupil academic achievement, and reduce pupil absenteeism and drop-out by facilitating transparency and accountability (Gertler, Patrinos, & Rubio-Codina, 2007; Henveld & Craig, 1996; Jimenez & Paqueo, 1996; Pailwar & Mahajan; 2005). It is also generally assumed that through this approach everybody in a community, including marginalized members such as OVCs, have an equal opportunity to participate in decision making, implement agreed-upon activities, and evaluate and

benefit from the outcomes of such actions. In other words, it is believed that community participation includes, or can and should include, all members of a community in active, democratic decision-making about education. It does not problematize inequality in participation.

Different hyper-community participation advocates may focus on different aspects of decentralization. Jimenez and Paqueo (1996) and Henveld and Craig (1996) conceptualize community participation largely in terms of economic decentralization. By this they mean that community and school level institutions should decide and budget for educational activities and ensure the financing of the same. From their perspectives, this type of decentralization and resulting community participation will generate additional resources and improve resource allocation. Other researchers focus on administrative, social, and/or political decentralization (Pailwar & Mahajan, 2005), and the effects of these on transparency and accountability.

There are a number of studies that have been conducted to examine the claims made by hyper-community participation advocates. Many of these are program evaluations, and the evaluations themselves do not necessarily study the counterfactuals raised by the other two approaches I will describe below. For example, many of the evaluations judge the success or failure of decentralization efforts based only on average measures of student achievement and do not examine whether there are different outcomes for marginalized children (Gertler, Patrinos & Rubio-Codina, 2007). Similarly, few of the studies examine who participates in decentralized processes, or who might benefit in unintended ways from these processes. In other words, they measure intended effects only. Given these limitations, these studies indicate that at least

some decentralization-for-participation efforts have had positive effects on some children's schooling.

For example, Gertler, Patrinos and Rubio-Codina (2007) assessed the impact of AGEs, a school-based management intervention in Mexico that transferred significant authority to the school level and provided grants to schools. The scholars assessed the impact of the interventions on failure, repetition, and drop-out rates of school children. Both the qualitative and quantitative results showed that AGEs reduced student repetition and drop-out rates, which were higher in comparable schools where this intervention was not present. Gertler et al. (2007) therefore argued that by devolving decision-making power over the use of grants to local levels, AGEs made community members feel motivated to utilize the resources in the most effective way, which they understood to be the areas that would make the most impact on their children's educational performance. The findings suggest that increasing economic decision-making power at the local level can increase parental participation at schools, which may lead to improved accountability of teachers for parents and teachers. But AGEs was not a simple economic decentralization policy. The stipulated policies on the use of grants by the government required that teachers, parents and other community members participate in the planning, utilization, and monitoring of the resources (administrative and political decentralization). The scholars argued that this, in turn, improved communication between the school and the community, created a conducive learning environment for children, and positively impacted the learning outcomes of learners. AGEs thus provide some support for hyper-community participation claims that decentralization may improve students' schooling. At the same time, the program

reveals that formal, top-down policies outlined how a broader range of community members were supposed to be incorporated into decision-making positions.

Jimenez and Paqueo (1996) use cost, financial sources, and student achievement data from a nationwide sample of Philippine primary schools to measure the impact of community participation, cost-effectiveness, and efficiency of schools. By efficiency, they mean the communities are more interested in the way the funds are being utilized prudently and maximum returns are achieved for every dollar spent. They concluded that financial decentralization that allows for local resource contribution from local school board, municipal government PTAs, student contributions, income-generating activities and other sources, does increase school efficiency and financial accountability to the parents, students, and other clients. Jimenez and Paqueo (1996) also noted that achievement test scores, availability and quality of resources like physical facilities and more frequent PTA meetings were better in schools that had generated their own resources to support education than in schools that relied on government resources.

Other scholars, such as Henveld and Craig (1996), conducted a regional study on managing schools for effectiveness in which they analyzed 26 World Bank-supported primary education projects in Sub-Saharan Africa. By effectiveness they meant that community members were involved as learning resources and were not only contributing resources toward facilities construction. The other elements of effective education included: presence of school-level autonomy in curricular decision-making, good school/home climate that fosters learning of students, teaching/learning process that enabled children to attain high academic achievement, and frequent pupil evaluation and feedback from teachers.

Henveld and Craig (1996) identified five categories of strong parent and community supports that they posited were necessary for effective community participation. These included: children coming to school prepared to learn; the community providing financial and material support to school; frequent communication between the school and the parents and community; community having meaningful role in school governance; and community members and parents assisting with instruction. Out of the 26 projects, twenty of them were only designed to have communities participate in physical facility improvement, like school construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance. Participation took place through community contributions in the form of money, materials, and labor towards school infrastructure, including classroom blocks and teachers' houses. None of the projects were designed to improve communication between the school and community, and there was no expressed expectation that community members and parents should assist in the education of their children (Henveld & Craig, 1996).

This review suggests that, despite their rhetoric, World Bank education projects in practice took community participation to mean the provision of financial and material support by the community to improve school infrastructure, a rather narrow definition of participation that will be further discussed in the community participation skeptics section below. Despite their critique of the narrowness of this definition of participation, Heneveld and Craig's list of five forms of participation differ in form but not in focus—they all assume that there are no internal power dynamics or differences in the community, and therefore that parental participation of these forms is non-problematic. They ignore, for example, the literature indicating that illiterate parents often feel very

uncomfortable engaging in "instruction" in the school, just as they ignore the implications of 20 percent of children having lost their parents.

Complementing the studies above, which generally focused on issues of economic decentralization, other researchers have emphasized the role of decentralization and community participation in democratization. For example, Pailwar and Mahajan (2005) reviewed the basic framework and outcome of the Janshala education program in Jharkhand, India. The program aimed to facilitate community participation in effective school management and foster child rights; improve teacher performance in teaching and learning methodologies; and increase school attendance of difficult to reach children. The authors concluded that active community involvement and accountability did increase the efficiency and effectiveness of education programs geared towards attaining Universal Primary Education (UPE). They defined efficiency as involving community members in identifying education challenges at their local school, formulating effective strategies to deal with those challenges, mobilizing and managing resources, and monitoring the implementation of the solutions. On the other hand, they defined effectiveness as the community working through the local education institutions to identify the needs of their local school and make sure that costs and services are tailored to local conditions and users' demands.

Community participation was fostered through the formation of formal institutions called village education committees, which gave due representation to all sections of people in the society. Pailwar and Mahajan (2005) called this a "demand responsive approach" to schooling, as the community became the hub from where solutions were hatched according to the local environment and available resources. They

found that it was easier to improve the motivation and self-esteem of parents, teachers, and other community members using the demand responsive approach because problems and their solutions were identified by the people.

Pailwar and Mahajan reported that the community participation program in India hinged on the institutionalization of democratic governance mechanisms, such as the establishment of PTAs, block education committees (BECs), mother groups, self-help groups, and community mobilization and sensitization to bring awareness to community members of education issues at their school. Community mobilization in this case led to communities supporting the schools with local resources and actively ensuring effective and efficient use of such resources through the committees they had established. Some of the positive results that were highlighted by Pailwar and Mahajan include: active participation of community members in community groups like PTA (78% of community members regularly attended PTA meetings); active monitoring of enrollment, attendance and performance of children in school by members of village education committees (VEC) and mother groups leading to low percentage of drop-outs; and parents sending their children regularly to class (90% of children were in school on a regular basis).

While these studies of efficiency and effectiveness fueled by decentralization provide a positive impression of the impact of community participation on education quality and quantity, they raise many questions in the context of my proposed study. For instance, these studies do not sufficiently address the ways that community participation is conceptualized by various actors, especially at the local level. Moreover, they do not explicate how top-down models of community participation are operationalized on the

ground, and particularly the effects on relations of power that such participation may (re)produce. These issues are hidden by the discourses and categories used in these studies, which largely represent what Ferguson (1990) and Dean (2002) refer to as techno-rational forms of development discourse—that is, forms in which relations of power and authority, and the political ramifications of particular policies or programs, are subsumed by development logics that successfully replace political rationales with techno-rational (often marketed) forms, including efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, and consumers.

Despite the shortcomings of the studies discussed above, I drew from them in identifying common ways that community participation is rationalized (for example, as a mechanism for increasing educational efficiency) and assessed (such as the frequency of PTA meetings or attendance and participation of various identified groups within the community) in the field of international development. These are important framings of community participation that carry significant resources and rhetorical power, and the role of this power in shaping local practices must be carefully examined.

Community participation skeptics

In contrast to the studies in the previous section, the second group of scholars can be classified by their skepticism about community participation as it is conceptualized by mainstream development institutions such as the World Bank. These scholars are particularly concerned about the hyper-community participation advocate's disregard of relations of power among "community" members. Often informed by critical theory, the skeptics emphasize that not all members of communities can readily and equally

participate, and in some cases, some members 'pseudo-participate' because they are coerced into doing so (Rose, 2003; Bowen, 1986; Ribot, 1995).

The skeptics' approach to the study of community participation includes the examination of competing power interests among groups at the community level, such as between women and men and between wealthier and poorer community members. These scholars are also concerned about the broader development framework within which community participation is constructed (and often required), and so they examine relations among actors and institutions at local, national, and international levels. For example, they analyze relations between local and international NGOs involved in the education of OVCs to understand who gets to define aid recipients and who determines modes of community participation in NGO projects.

The aim of many scholars in this group is to address the injustices that can occur as a result of, or in spite of, community participation in education (Elliot, 2009; Kincheloe &McLaren, 2000). This approach theorizes that community participation (a central stated outcome of education decentralization policies) does not necessarily have the positive effects on educational quality and on democratic participation posited by the hyper-community participation advocates precisely because participatory processes that are put in place by those with power can end up further marginalizing already less powerful individuals and groups (both within communities and among communities and other state and non-state actors). However, community participation skeptics do not fully discount the possibility of community participation having positive effects; rather, they argue that one should not assume that anything labeled "decentralization" or "community participation" by powerful international development actors or national

governments automatically increases equity or justice. They also argue that the outcomes valued by these actors, such as efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and democracy, may not be those valued by the "end users" of community participation schemes, and may not improve the lives of the less powerful. For example, they argue that the economic rationale for community participation captured by the efficiency and effectiveness literature is too narrow a focus and that 'true' participation would lead to a more radical transformation of school-community relations. Empirical studies conducted by Anderson (1998), Banerjee, Banerji, Duflo, Glennerster and Khemani (2010), Bray, (1996), Rhoten (2000), Morrow & Torres (2000), Pryor (2005), and Rose (2003), exemplify the assumption that current mainstream models of community participation are insufficient at transforming relations of power and that there is limited amount of time available to attain such transformations, and that in fact pseudo-participation occurs more often when participatory modes and intended outcomes are determined by those with power.

Within the broad category of community participation skeptics, there are two distinct sub-groups. The first group of skeptics does not question the goal of increasing efficiency of schooling through community participation, nor does it question the value of the economic rationales that often drive the hyper-enthusiasts. The skeptics do, however, question the mechanisms for achieving community participation that are supported by hyper-community participation advocates, given the substantial economic, social, and political constraints various community members face. For example, Banerjee, Banerji, Duflo, Glennerster, and Khemani (2010) argue that intervention methods aimed at attaining community participation to improve education delivery do not always achieve the intended results. They conducted an evaluation study in India

where the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) elementary program, through its decentralization agenda, gave a prominent role to the village education committees (VECs). The VECs monitored the performance of the school and reported challenges to and requested for resources from higher authorities. They were also responsible for deciding on teacher contractual renewal and recruiting. The interventions under this program were designed and implemented by Pratham, India's most prominent educational NGO.

Banerjee et al. found that this approach to promoting community participation did not affect large group indirect or direct control over public schools in terms of participation by any of the players (the parents, the VECS, the teachers), nor did school performance improve. The following were some of the factors they highlighted that showed decentralization did not lead to community participation: intervention methods did not generate education volunteering; group mechanisms made different demands on the community and there were great challenges faced in sustaining collective action; the need for involvement of local or non-local elite (those that command a lot of influence beyond the village) who have experience in reporting and complaining about education to those higher up; and power relations between teachers and community, as well as amongst the community members themselves, influencing whether community members participated or not. In other words, they found that by not addressing power relations, particularly the role of elites in approving and supporting school change and collective action, the project failed to create change, to be sustainable, or to include people equally.

The second group of skeptics shares the view that community participation does not necessarily lead to increased economic efficiency, but argue that the more important

point is that these efforts may in fact increase social, educational, and economic inequity. They argue that power differentials among actors play a central role in determining the meanings and outcomes of community participation efforts, and calls for community participation may therefore reinstitute or further produce these power differentials. For example, Bray (1996) examined community financing of primary and community secondary schools education in Bhutan. He acknowledges the positive impact that community contributions make on improving educational quality, but he deplores the social injustices such participation inflicts on the poor and marginalized people:

> Community financing may also contribute to socio-economic disparities. This is particularly prominent where all members of the community are required to contribute to the construction of schools, but where user fees then obstruct enrolment of children from the poorest families. (p. 510)

Bray (1996) also points out that most times governments ask communities in rural areas to contribute financially to education even though in many countries these are the areas where the poorest reside. The logic on the part of governments is that the urban areas are more difficult sites in which to mobilize resources, but Bray seems skeptical of this argument. From his study in Bhutan, Bray (1996) ably shows how the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) has substantially increased the demand for schooling, and also local financing to provide it. He then shows how local financing may have negative results on less-resourced communities:

> The Bhutanese government has endeavored to look after the interests of disadvantaged communities which find it difficult to help themselves; but the

> inputs of local resources inevitably exacerbate existing inequalities, and allow communities which are aggressive and well-organized to move ahead of the others (p. 510).

Relatedly, Anderson (1998) argues that participation by community members in school decision-making can actually be used as a tool of greater control over schools by top authorities. Authorities, he argues, are able through community participation measures to communicate directly with school-level actors and to impose their power/decisions on them due to the unequal power dynamics that normally exist between the two sets of actors. Anderson also notes that it is easy for such modes of participation to become sites of collusion among dominant groups, such as middle and upper income parents dominating the poor. He notes that there is research that suggests that shared governance structures may not result in significant participation in decisions but instead may result in contrived collegiality between the upper and middle class people with those in authority in education offices. He further argues that at times participation leads to wasting participants' time by trying to involve everybody in decision-making. However, Anderson believes that contestations over participation discourse and practice contain transformative possibilities for the creation of more authentic approaches to participation. For Anderson and other skeptics who use critical theory in their analyses, this transformation might include "problematizing the linguistic slippage that occurs with regard to the meaning of participation" (p. 574).

Rose is another community participation skeptic who shares the view that community participation does not necessarily lead to increased justice or equity, or economic efficiency. Rose (2003) conducted research in Malawi to explore the extent to

which community participation, which she later describes as pseudo-participation, is actually practiced on the ground. From an in-depth study of community involvement in primary schools, she concluded that the main motivation for the government to call for community participation is extractive, meaning it is most often limited to calling on communities to contribute resources for school construction and maintenance. This form of participation does not foster local ownership and accountability as contended by the hyper-community participation advocates.

Rose argues that genuine community participation consists of "the ability of community members to take part in real decision-making and governance, where all members have equal power to determine the outcome of decisions and share in a joint activity" (p. 47). Rose further explains that the decision to participate should originate at the local level and not from policy makers. She further argues that top-down models of community participation do not necessarily lead to communities voluntarily participating; rather, they are at times forced to do so by international agreements that governments sign with development partners. For example, before the World Bank funded the Malawi Social Action Fund Programme (MASAF) (which constructed many schools), communities had to contribute resources:

> Applications for MASAF funding are supposed to be made on the basis of communities prioritizing their needs, and showing a commitment to provide 20% of the resources for their proposed project (in cash or kind, with labor and materials valued at market rates). Community co-financing in MASAF projects is seen as a way to encourage community ownership, and as a reflection of true demand. (World Bank, 1996 cited in Rose, 2003 p. 54)

Rose (2003) also argues that these agreements are signed under the condition of unequal power relations between the national governments in low-income countries and development organizations that fund much of these government's education development projects. She also contends that community participation does not necessarily lead to collective action, as the word "community participation" would make someone believe, but ends up leading to individuals taking charge of and paying for social services like education, instead of the community or state paying for it. Rose (2003) further points out that community participation could lead to further marginalization of children from poor families:

> Although community contributions are expected from households whether or not children are in school, it is more difficult for schools to impose sanctions if children are not in school. Where households could neither afford time nor money, it was reported at two schools that they sometimes responded by withdrawing children from school. Thus, community contributions could also exacerbate inequalities in schooling opportunities as children from the poorest households are most likely to be withdrawn from school as a result of the demand for their contributions. (p. 60)

Another community participation skeptic, Pryor (2005), conducted ethnographic research in Ghana on community participation. He draws from Bourdieu to demonstrate that where schooling and community life are treated and operate as separate and different entities, community mobilization towards improving education quality in the school can be very problematic (Bourdieu, 1977). Pryor takes village and school as the structured arenas of social interaction that shape and are shaped by the students, parents,

teachers and all the other people that practice in such arenas. He contends that macro policies, such as community participation, enacted in a micro-context, like a school, do not always produce the intended results. For example, he notes injustices that occur when members of the community that do not value and see education as relevant are coerced to participate in improving the educational quality of a nearby school. Pryor further argues that there are a number of factors that may lead to people deciding whether to participate or not, such as matrilineal cultural norms and poverty, in the case of Ghana. He believes that villages are comprised of heterogeneous people and hence they value schooling differently, which is contrary to what the hyper-community participation advocates assume. By viewing communities as heterogeneous, Pryor's research provides room for questioning the relevance of education to village life by some community members. Like Rose (2003), Pryor critiques the assumption that power is equally held by individuals and groups in the community. He provides examples of the unequal power relations he observed between parents and teachers; pupils and parents; and school committees and teachers. He points out that such imbalances prohibit participation by some people during decision-making meetings, as they feel inferior or intimidated. Moreover, he suggests that relations of power may result in those who are more highly ranked within local social hierarchies rarely taking suggestions from those with less power.

Generally, community participation skeptics even though much immersed in critical theory, they have resemblance of the traditions that are strongly focused on structural categories and inequalities that are viewed as relatively stable and homogenous. For example, Rose's (2003) analysis largely focuses on educational

outcome by family's economic quintile position. While these critiques are very useful in thinking about relations of power, power is generally conceptualized as static and bound to fixed identity or group characteristics. The findings from these studies show that community participation, though widely advocated by governments and international development institutions for the improvement of educational quality and the empowerment of all community members, could lead to further marginalization of various groups. Such groups are usually conceptualized as categorically stable and include the youth, women, the poor, the rural, and linguistic, religious, and ethnic minorities. This skepticism about community participation raises important issues that my dissertation research pursues. For example, these approaches recognize the need to look for coercion as well as increased democratic decision-making in purportedly participatory activities, and to recognize that not all actors have similar experiences in events like stakeholder meetings or decision-making processes.

Community participation transformation scholars

The third group of community participation scholars is comprised of transformation scholars. Transformation scholars pay much more attention to the cultural and socio-political aspects of community participation than the other two groups. Moreover, they are less likely to make claims about the future of community participation, greater equality or greater inequality, more integration or more fragmentation, because they view it as a long-term historical process inscribed with contradictions and constantly (re)shaped by contextual factors. This group of scholars problematizes the concept of community participation using critical discourse analysis and critical ethnographic methods to analyze national politics vis-à-vis IDOs and local

political institutions and to show that there is no universal meaning, practice, or outcome of the term.

Transformation scholars, building on both critical theory and poststructuralism, argue that who gets to participate in community-level education reforms differs by context; that is, it depends on how different groups of actors understand the idea of participation and their roles and responsibilities in the provision of quality education, and the settings in which these reforms are enacted. This group asks not 'does a particular community group participate' but rather 'how do different groups of actors understand what it means to participate'? Unlike the hyper-community participation advocates, they view community participation as a technology of power, and they view its meaning and effects as changing and differing over time and across places. In contrast to the skeptics who see power in more material and static terms, they see power in discourses. Kendall (2007), Taylor (2009), Vavrus and Seghers (2010), and Wilkinson (2009) fall under this third approach. Though the transformation scholars share many of the same concerns as the skeptics regarding the coerciveness of participation and the possibility of social change through 'genuine' participation, they are more interested in how community participation as discourse and practice shapes the operations of participation on the ground.

For example, Kendall (2007) points out that the definition of community participation and educational quality changes depends upon the people that define them. For instance, in the schools that she worked, community members assessed their schools by how many students were selected to secondary schools, especially national secondary schools. The teachers thus put all their efforts in teaching students in grade 8 so that they

can be selected to go to secondary school. This made them forget all other facets outlined by MoEST that are said to define quality education. The meaning of education quality thus drove teachers' to do what they were doing so that students passed the examinations and be selected to secondary schools. She argues that there has been a shift in the education development literature concerning how to better measure quality education. At first, the literature focused on simple input and outputs; then, there was a shift toward backwards-mapping approaches in which researchers tried to determine what led to improved educational results (usually measured by national exams), and/or in which researchers tried to map local conceptions of quality in order to address parents', teachers', and students' concerns about what was happening in their schools. More recently there has been a shift toward randomized experiments that test the effects of relatively simple inputs on retention and achievement measures (Kendall, 2007). These shifts in thinking about quality (which overlap one another in practice) affect how Malawian communities experience education reform efforts and in some cases how they view education quality, which in turn affects how they participate in education. Kendall further shows that local definitions of quality education may affect how various community members participate, though their understandings of quality may not encompass a definition of quality as defined by policy makers.

Another aspect of Kendall's research questions how resource contributions made in the name of participation by parents who are at the margins of desperate poverty can create a sense of ownership. This question points to the common assumption in the work of many transformation scholars that the role of the more powerful in shaping official definitions of participation may, in practice, result in negative consequences for those

who are already marginalized, and may fundamentally not align with the frameworks through which the concept of participation is officially constituted. For example, in the case above, Kendall points to the disjuncture and the contradictions between the expectations of IDOs that a particular type of participation (resource contributions) will lead to "a sense of ownership" and the reality of very poor people's lives. At the same time, effort is made to note different realities and thus responses to this type of participation, pointing to the (sometimes uneven) effort to not create totalizing categories.

Vavrus and Seghers (2010) also argue that the meanings attached to different international development discourses, such as community participation, vary amongst different groups of actors and get taken up in national policy to varying degrees based on local, national, and international relations of power. Vavrus and Seghers applied critical discourse analysis, a theoretical framework for textual analysis that is grounded in critical theory, to examine the poverty reduction policies of the United Republic of Tanzania. In particular, they scrutinize the claims of partnership made in these policies. They argue that in the Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) that were carried out across Tanzania to inform the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and the Joint Staff Assessments (JSAs) written by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Development Association of the World Bank, terms like partnership, community and education were not ascribed the same meanings across the PPAs, PRSPs and JSA.

Vavrus and Seghers' study shows that a great deal of information is lost or reconstituted through interpretation and transformations by local, national or

international partners when reporting from one level to the other. For example, the linguistic analysis they conducted that looked at how certain words were semantically and syntactically constructed in texts provided a clue to the meanings ascribed to certain terms by various partners. From the study it was found that the meanings ascribed to and ownership of the planned activities or strategies were different depending on the people or organizations that produced the text. Their study revealed that most times, the texts written in PPAs to reflect the views of poor, marginalized community members were not written by the community members themselves but by educated development professionals who interpreted and phrased such texts not to conform to the voices and concerns of community members, but to meet the standards of other partners like local government or non-government institutions or development partners. They therefore argue that, "the issues of language proficiency and translation of texts should not only be addressed literally at the meso level of analysis. One should also attend to the more subtle transformations as elements of one document are being paraphrased and re-contextualized in another text for different audiences" (p. 90). The various meanings of texts attributed to the words led to the way different people at different levels participated in development in the process transforming the intended ideas that were originally thought to be conveyed.

Using Fairclough's (1992) tripartite framework, i.e. discourse-as-text; discourse-as-discursive-practice; and discourse-as-social-practice, Vavrus and Seghers contend that information changes in meaning and in the way it is documented as it moves from one level to the other. They state that it is critical to examine how information is

transformed and interpreted and how roles and degree of commitment are assigned to various groups in texts.

Vavrus and Seghers' research indicates that language has power. They state that at times language "as a form of action does not only reflect but also produces social marginalization" (2010, p. 92). Their critical discourse analysis shows that sometimes the voices of the poor may be heard by some stakeholders, but this "hearing" may not affect transformation in action or policy when the voices are not in conformity with the existing reforms/beliefs of other partners. This reinforces existing social power relations, but now does so in the name of full participation.

Wilkinson's research project also illuminates the concerns and approaches of community participation transformation scholars. Wilkinson (2009) conducted a vertical case study (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006) in Porto Alegre, Brazil to examine if and how community participation promoted inclusiveness, citizenship, and democracy in Brazilian schools as envisaged by the policies put in place by the Workers' Party, a left-leaning political party active in the city. Her study of school cultures revealed that there was a limited participatory culture in school councils. For example, the monthly meetings attended by school councilors rarely lasted for more than 45 minutes, the agenda and tenor of meetings were established by the school administrators, the parent representatives did not question the administrators' decisions, the content of the meetings was limited to verifying budgets and signing expense reports that were prepared by the administrators, and the parents mainly endorsed decisions made by administrators. Wilkinson also reported that the school councilors did not present the

community's interests during meetings, as they only made contributions to the items on an agenda that was formulated by the administrators.

Moreover, it appeared that one of the primary motivations for joining the parents' committees was to gain preferential access to school personnel, premises or events rather than to represent one's fellow parents in the way envisioned by the Workers' Party's policies on community participation in school decision-making (Wilkinson, 2009). However, Wilkinson states that the school councilors regarded themselves as active participants during school meetings and regarded such meetings as sites of learning and becoming more active as citizens, even though there was little deliberation on vital education issues such as allocation of public resources and the curriculum.

Thus, Wilkinson concludes that there is a significant gap between the discourse and practice of community participation in this case. Wilkinson argues that "the actual conductivity of participation is heavily contingent upon how participatory discourse is appropriated by the actors involved and by the behaviors, practices and interactions that take place among them in participatory venues" (p. 94). At the national level, it was assumed that the school councils were institutions through which stakeholders democratically participated in schools, but on the ground it was revealed that the councils did not cultivate a fully participatory culture or achieve the desired degree of social inclusion among low-income parents.

Lastly, Taylor (2009) looks at the notion of participation and how the term has proliferated in the policies and practices of national and international organizations working in the field of education. She shows, also through a vertical case study of

primary education reform, how participation is differently defined by actors and institutions in Tanzania. Taylor conducted an institutional ethnographic study with HakiElimu, a local NGO in Tanzania, and held interviews with policy makers at the national and international level to learn about their definitions of community participation. Taylor found that different meanings were attached to the term participation by school committee members, community members, local NGOs and government officials. She analyzed how these differences influenced the types of activities that were carried out by these different actors. For example, school committees defined community participation as the timely provision of resources by the community members to build a classroom block, whether or not they had participated in decision-making about constructing the building. In contrast, the district education officials looked at community participation as a process through which community members would discuss issues about their school, come up with constraints to achieving education quality at their school, and make decisions concerning what should be done in order to deal with the problems (Taylor, 2009). Taylor's analysis highlights the contextually contingent power dynamics that existed in school decision-making practices, and analyzes who participated in community-level education reforms, and how they did so. It shows how the meaning of community participation kept changing, at times contradictory and consequently led to the actors acting differently, as they felt what it meant by participation.

Taylor also notes that language and information play an important role in the degree to which people participate. The assumption that everybody will be able to read and access information about schools, policies, and proposed reforms, needs to be

critiqued when community participation is being advocated as a response to engaging community members. Taylor also looked at how factors such as community gender dynamics and national politics influenced and modeled the type of community participation that was taking place in Tanzania. The various groups of stakeholders she interviewed had different understandings of what it meant to participate, but only some of these understandings had significant resources behind them.

The studies in this section show that the meanings of words or concepts like community participation and school quality can change over time, are not fixed, and may lead to different community members participating differently, depending upon what meanings they have attached to the concept and which meanings are powerful in a given setting. Like the community participation skeptics, these studies raise important questions about the idea that communities are homogeneous and that there is a community that participates equally in decision-making or in activities like school construction. Unlike the skeptics, transformation scholars are more likely to focus on the contingent, partial, changing, contradictory, and uneven consequences of various forms of community participation. As such, they are less likely than the skeptics to conclude that current forms of participation are wholly false or useless and less likely to conclude that there are easily applicable, wholly unproblematic alternative models that simply need to be deployed.

The three strands of literature on community participation that were reviewed above point to a range of ways of conceptualizing communities, participation, and power, and a range of ways of conceptualizing and measuring the effects of participatory efforts. From researchers who view community participation as a mechanism for

increasing school efficiency, to researchers who view community participation as a coercive mechanism that serves to reproduce inequitable relations of power, to poststructural and critical theorists who reject the notion of a shared understanding of or response to the idea of community participation, these approaches represent a range of epistemological, theoretical, and methodological tools that are used by researchers interested in the idea of community participation. Hyper-community participation advocate's perspectives are more often codified in international development projects and policies and backed with extensive material resources and political authority. Skeptic and transformation scholars more often work on the margins of official development discourse and practice, attempting to rupture common understandings of the discourses, relations, and practices that constitute participatory development, often in an attempt to transform the commonsense assumptions made in development about this understanding.

My research is built on insights from all three strands of literature, but particularly the last two, in examining the meanings that OVCs, guardians, chiefs, parents, school management committees, local and national education officials and development agencies had concerning community participation and how these different views impacted on the participation and schooling of OVCs in Malawi's CDSSs.

Focusing on community participation as a central development discourse, and examining how the term is being interpreted by the various groups of people who make up the communities in which I worked, will enhance our understanding of how development discourses travel and function, if and how they influence practice, and what the relationship between discourse and practice means for the potential of development

efforts to improve OVSs' lives. The discourse about community participation is particularly important to understand because, as described above, it plays a very central role in what IDOs say is needed to improve OVCs' wellbeing in countries like Malawi. Robinson –Pant (2001) explains that studying development as discourse provides an opportunity to learn how certain things happen the way they do, and what and who is valued in the process. Bringing such an analysis to understand how development discourses and practices are affecting OVCs in Malawi and the region is essential.

In my dissertation, the study of discourses and practices of community participation in the education of the OVSs unveils the forms and mechanisms of current development practices and their potentials and limitations for supporting OVSs' wellbeing. One intention of this dissertation is to explore how the IDOs and GoM's definitions of community participation correspond to meanings of the term at the local level, and how these terms are understood, appropriated, rejected, and transformed by local-level actors involved in the education of OVSs. I engage in "constructive deconstruction" of the idea and the practices of community participation in order to transform the ways that IDOs and the GoM and community members can imagine, can talk about, and act to support OVSs and their wellbeing.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I began by introducing critical theory and how I have used it, along with interpretivism, to explore policy and development discourse. I then reviewed three different approaches to the study of community participation and explained how they were each useful for my study.

I explained why the community participation skeptics and transformation scholars were the most useful in helping me frame my research, as they helped me to analyze the rhetoric of official policies in light of a range of critical and poststructural positions that do not take for granted the links between decentralization, economic efficiency, equity, and community participation. They provided the tools for a critical discourse analysis of official policies concerning community participation and a way of linking official policy and its modes of framing community participation to the daily practices that constitute OVSs' education in CDSSs. By allowing me to engage the rhetoric of policy with the realities of daily practices, transformation scholars' approaches allowed me to explore how community members came to learn of, interpret, and act upon current official discourses of community participation and their calls for increased community responsibility for secondary schooling and OVSs.

In the next chapter, I discuss the methodology that I utilized to conduct my research as it emerged from the transformationalist approach.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY, AND METHODS

Introduction

Current IDO theories of community and of community participation are frequently disconnected from OVCs daily lives and from an understanding of the social and material conditions of communities in which OVCs live. They are also disconnected from theories of power, which critical theory centers on and which are essential to understanding OVCs experiences and outcomes and understanding the consequences of international development efforts (Cornish & Ghosh, 2007). In order to understand community participation from a critical conceptual frame, it was necessary for me to spend a lot of time watching how communities function and to talk to people about their experiences in them. Ethnography is best suited to this approach, but because of the interest I had in the nested units of social and institutional organization and analysis, ethnographic tools needed to include individual, group, and institutional foci. Also it was important to understand the geographical place and material resources available and their linkages to community and the possibilities for participation. Therefore, the research needed a comparative approach that decentered the possibility of essentializing one community as "the way" that communities work. The multi-sited comparative case study design enabled me to investigate community participation in its daily practices and consequences, while at the same time allowing me to destabilize or corroborate various findings across the two very different research sites (Huberman & Miles, 1994; Yin, 2003).

In this chapter, I begin by discussing my pre-dissertation field work I had conducted prior to my filed research. This is followed by sections on the main field work

that I did which comprise introductory meetings, purposive selection of research sites, data collection activity and data analysis. Finally, I discuss the limitations and challenges encountered in my research that is followed by a conclusion of the chapter.

Entering the field

Pre-dissertation field work

The field research study started with the pre-dissertation field work that was undertaken during summer 2011. Even though I am a Malawian and very conversant with the cultural and geographical set-up of the country, it was necessary for me to conduct this pre-dissertation field work in order to begin to explore a diversity of preliminary understandings of school-community participation by policy makers, educators, parents, chiefs, and OVSs that were attending CDSSs; formulate appropriate research and preliminary interview questions; visit the three regions where I could possibly conduct my research to ensure an appropriate comparative study design; meet MoEST and Center for Educational Research and Training (CERT) officials to introduce my research; begin the research clearance process; and locate relevant policy documents. I traveled more than 600 kilometers to meet officials at Ministry of Education headquarters in Lilongwe (central region), 1000 kilometers to meet division officials in Mzuzu (northern region) and a total of 1200 kilometers to meet district education officials and visit potential CDSSs in three districts (Mzimba, Kasungu and Zomba). My previous work with a national NGO and the Coalition for Quality Basic Education (which dealt with education programs and required constant discussions with the Ministry, division and district officials) made it possible for me to hold meetings with these officials. They were very supportive of my plan to conduct research on community

participation and its forms as related to CDSSs and the education of OVSs. They said that to their knowledge no one in Malawi has conducted this type of research.

The visits to potential field sites provided me an opportunity to have some understanding of the experiences of three rural communities (one in each of the regions of Malawi) and the OVSs that live in them as they interact with their local CDSS. The three rural communities I visited were those that were in the catchment area of the following CDSSs: Mabuti CDSS in Mzimba district in the northern region, Mphomwa CDSS in Kasungu district in the central region, and Londola CDSS in Zomba district in the southern region. I had a chance to meet and discuss with some individual community members at each site, including village leaders (chiefs), parents, guardians of OVSs and CDSS committee members, OVSs, and teachers. I also conducted focus group discussions with some students from each CDSS. I wanted to have an idea about how various participants in the study areas viewed the concept of community participation, and how they implemented, appropriated, ignored or modified this concept through their own and other community members' practices of schooling OVSs in CDSSs. The field visits opened my eyes that it was not going to be possible to conduct ethnographic research in the three regions due to time and the distance it would take me to cover the three regions. Through discussions with the officials from CERT and my research supervisor, I decided to scale down to two research sites while taking into account the literature that argues strongly that type of the marriage system that was being practiced mattered greatly. I therefore decided to stick to one school in the northern region and the other in the southern region. The northern region practices a patrilineal type system of marriage and inheritance while the south practices a matrilineal type of marriage and

inheritance systems. In Kasungu, a mix of the two systems is found, and so for the purposes of this comparison, I judged it to be more useful to have two case studies that clearly represented one or the other type. Of course, many people in Malawi live in villages or towns where these systems are mixing, shifting, or even disintegrating, but these patterns were perhaps even more evident in these supposedly "solidly" matrilineal and patrilineal areas.

The main field research

Research clearance and introductory meetings

The pre-dissertation field visit provided a strong foundation for the upcoming main research and also assisted me in reframing the research questions I had on the study when I came back to Malawi. I returned to Malawi from the University of Minnesota after completing my class work in May 2012. Soon after arrival, I embarked on my main research. Firstly, I sent an email with my research proposal to seek clearance to the Principal Secretary for Education, who was previously the Director for Secondary Education and responsible for CDSSs. This task was easily accomplished as I had met her before, during my first visit to MoEST headquarters in the previous year. The Principal Secretary for Education gave me a letter authorizing me to conduct the research in the two Education Divisions – South Eastern Education Division (SEED) and Northern Education Division (NED). She also accepted to be interviewed, and the interview lasted more than one and half hours.

After getting clearance, I held introductory meetings with various government officials from different offices. These offices included: The District Education

Manager's (DEM) office and the Education Division Manager's (EDM) office. I was fortunate in that I knew all the officials from my previous working relationship and was thus able to meet with and conduct semi-structured interviews with two District Education Managers, two Education Divisional Managers, and two Desk Officers from the Division Managers' office. During these interviews with the various Ministry officials, I once again explained the objectives of my research and asked them questions on existing policies related to CDSSs and the role of communities in their establishment, running and provision of support for the education of OVCs. I also interviewed these officials to learn their perceptions on the meanings of words like "community', "orphan", and "vulnerable children". The interviews usually lasted for one hour which at times was recorded, if the participant consented to being recorded and at times I had to take notes. In all the offices, it was quite difficult for the officers to locate policy documents on CDSSs. For instance, on how to establish a CDSS, there was quite a lot of remembered history that was passed from one officer to the other. Nobody, however, produced a document that explained the rules and procedures that must be followed in order to establish a CDSS. Instead, each officer confidently outlined such processes as told to him or her by their predecessors. At the end of the interviews, I was able to work with the District Education Managers and desk officers from the Education Division Manager's office to identify potential field sites.

Purposively selection of CDSSs

As earlier stated in Chapter 1, in selecting a field site, I asked the managers to sample the CDSSs that were situated in the rural areas, because during the preliminary

field visit I had learnt that CDSSs were conceptualized on communities being involved in their establishment and management. For instance, for a CDSS to be established, I was told that a cluster of communities are supposed to identify the need for a secondary school in their area. It was further stated that in most cases, a cluster included the communities in the catchment areas of about five contiguous rural primary schools. Such communities from the cluster would meet to discuss the need for a CDSS and then through their Member of Parliament apply to the district education office. The district education officials made recommendations and sent the application to the Ministry of Education headquarters through the divisional education office. It was said that the government normally accepted the communities' application for a CDSS once the community had constructed a school classroom block and a teacher's house, or promised to build a school classroom block within two years after opening the school while they utilized primary school classroom blocks. This initial community investment was used as a proxy for community interest in, support for, and willingness to manage the CDSS.

Data collection

Soon after getting clearance, making introductions and selecting the CDSSs, and conducting interviews with MoEST and Education Divisional officials, I engaged two experienced, young qualitative research assistants (1 male and 1 female) that had previously worked with Center for Social Research (CSR) and CERT. The intention was to make sure, as an interactive approach (Maxwell, 2005), that the two easily interacted with their fellow young students from the CDSSs and the villages surrounding the schools while I dealt with the teachers, school management committees, parents, and community leaders. I briefed these research assistants about my research and the

research questions and conducted a three-day refresher course for them on qualitative methods of data collection. Knowing that "truth comes into existence in and out of involvement with reality and is construed differently by different people (Crotty, 1998, p. 8), we decided to live and collect our field data right at Londola CDSS site in Zomba Rural District Education (see Figure 2), which falls in the South East Education Division, from May to end of August, 2012.

Figure 2: Map of Londola CDSS

These three months are a short period if we take into account the time that is needed to conduct a thorough ethnographic research. However, my background as a Malawian meant that I was familiar with some cultural beliefs as well as the existing institutions and leadership structures in the villages and schools, and my more than 10 years of doing qualitative research on related educational topics played to my advantage.

During my introductions to the area, I had asked the village heads to identify a house for us to live in, and when we arrived in the area, the village heads, PTA and school management committee members showed us a small house with two small bed rooms and a sitting room. However, I could see from their faces that they were troubled as they whispered something to each other. I called one of the men and one of the women who had come to welcome us aside to find out if there was any challenge. The man said, "Mr. Kaunda, we did not make arrangements for the lady. We were just talking to each other about the possible places where we can accommodate the lady". I tried to reason with them that they should not worry since the house had two bedrooms, she could sleep in one room while we the men slept in the other room but they said it would not be good. Here, during the very first day, we were confronted with gender issues, and we made sure that gender issues were taken into account anytime we were collecting data. According to local cultural practices, it was difficult for the village leaders to comprehend that we could be sleeping in the same house with the woman to whom we were neither married nor related. I then asked if they had a family or a woman that was single that could accommodate the lady. They quickly conversed amongst themselves and agreed to approach one of the women in the village, who was not far from the house they had given us. This woman was once married and had two children but was now divorced. Fortunately, she agreed to accommodate the female research assistant but it meant we had to escort her to the house every evening after eating and discussing about the days' findings.

We mapped out the participants with whom we conducted structured and semi-structured interviews, participant observations and focus group discussions. The

participants included: parents, teachers, students, community leaders and school committee members. Other observations were made where people freely mingled and talked about their everyday life success, challenges and opportunities (for example, football matches, water source places where women and girls drew water, small market places, maize mills and so forth). However, every time a particular theme emerged that needed more information, for example, the establishment of Londola CDSS by the church, we identified and added a participant that would possibly provide more information on the issue, such as the Reverend of that particular religion. We also participated in numerous informal interviews to provide insights into themes that were emerging.

For semi-structured interviews, we purposively selected particular participants depending upon the theme we were dealing with by enquiring from the people from the area. For example, on the establishment of the CDSS, we enquired from the school management committee members about the village leaders who were instrumental in establishing Londola CDSS, and as for the support provided to students by CBOs, we enquired from the chairperson, treasurer and secretary of the CBOs. CBOs are community based organizations that are established by the government with an aim of supporting orphans in a particular geographical area, usually smaller area coverage when compared to local or International NGOs. They do have their own constitution, run by committee members from the area and are registered by the government. The main source of funding is the government and some business that they might engage in to get money. On the other hand, local NGOs are organizations that have a constitution and registered with the government of Malawi. Local NGOs usually have a wider

geographical operational area of coverage, usually do not have offices in the very remote areas they are implementing projects and most times get funding through project proposals that they submit to donors. At times they are sub-contracted to International NGOs. Most of their funding comes from donors. We interviewed those NGOs that were operating projects at the selected schools.

For the students, we had planned to consult the head teacher of each CDSS to guide in the purposive selection of sixteen orphaned and vulnerable students, (2 male and 2 female from each Form (grade) to take into account potential gender and age differences in orphans' experiences). We also tried to ensure that we had amongst the selected students some that lived with one parent, some that lived with extended relations, and others that were child headed.

However, the plan to utilize the head teacher to help in purposively selecting the OVSs from the CDSS proved futile because the head teacher at Londola did not keep records in an organized manner. He did not know which students were orphans (lost both parents) or whether they lost one parent and lived with the other parent only. While this was important information to help us in understanding how the school conceptualized the category of OVS and its responsibility toward these students, we had to recalibrate our plan for reaching students. We instead, more slowly, got to know which students were orphans through interactions with students, village leaders, class teachers and parents. It was only then that we sampled those with whom we intended to conduct in-depth interviews. We did interview two OVSs living in a child-headed home from the area, one was attending an elite secondary and the other one had dropped out of school. However, there was none from a child headed home that was attending a CDSS.

As for the teachers, we interviewed the 4 class teachers, one for each Form (class/grade). All were males except one as there were no female teacher at Londola secondary school. However, a number of informal interviews were made with the other teachers to get a wider perspective on how teachers viewed education support towards the OVSs and learn from them if and how they perceived that community participation enhanced the education of OVSs.

Apart from the above, I conducted a basic quantitative survey (see Appendix A), which targeted 32 OVSs that were randomly selected to get some numerical data on household composition and the type of support that they thought was vital for their schooling in the CDSSs. This survey helped me to rank according to priority the type of support the OVSs listed. We always provided feedback to the people on what we found in a manner that did not appear to be personal, threatening, or embarrassing by making issues to be points of conversation which led into more analytical depths.

For Londola, Table 1below provides details of the structured and semi-structured interviews that we had conducted. The table does not include the numerous informal interviews we had with various groups:

Table 2: Londola CDSS participants interviewed (semi-structured interviews)

Participants	Male	Female
OVCs from CDSS	10	10
Guardians / single parents	5	11
Teachers	4	none (there was none at secondary school)
Students from district secondary school	2	None
CDSS School committee members	1	1
Community Based Organization members	1	1
Religious official	1 reverend	None
Village leaders	1 traditional authority	2 village heads
Total	25	25

Usually we started our days early in the morning to observe what the parents and the students did before the students went to school, how the students walked/ travelled to the CDSS and how the day was spent at school. Most times we found that by around 4:30 am, the female students had already woken up and started going to the boreholes to draw water, while others went to distant places to fetch firewood. They always walked in a group of two or more and usually talked as they went about doing their chores. The female research assistant at times joined the groups to draw water and fetch firewood. She made observations during the early morning hours of whom the female OVSs walked and chatted with in order to establish their social relations, and what type of

chores were they engaged in. These days were extremely long and physically tiring, much more so than was the case for most of the men with whom we worked. This gender difference in domestic chores is well-documented in Malawi and around the world; nonetheless, the implications of these different physical routines on the energy and time that female versus male OVSs had on average for studying was significant and was regularly discussed by our team.

We noted a few male students also went to draw water from the boreholes, which prompted us also (the male researchers) to do the same so that we observed the reaction of the women as we tried to interact with them in this gendered space. As with the male OVSs, whenever we males arrived at the borehole, women usually gave us way to draw water first. This was on the one hand an act signaling knowledge of and compliance with the deeply-ingrained gender inequity that operates throughout much of Malawi. On the other hand, as we lingered to listen to the conversations that occurred and wherever appropriate, we enquire on issues about household chores and their participation in education at CDSSs and in the lives and education of OVSs. It also appeared that this act of letting the man go first was also a way to re-form a gender-segregated space in which women could speak relatively freely about their lives and could enjoy time together in a relatively relaxed environment. Indeed, it was advantageous that we had a female researcher amidst us for she did most of the interviews with women and female students, as they most times were shy to speak to us on some of the topics like courtship or men propositioning the female students in exchange for money or help during class exercises.

Sometimes we joined the boys and men and went to their gardens including "*dimba"*[5]gardens where they were cultivating vegetables. These early morning spaces, in which we participated in cultivating the gardens and planting the vegetables, were usually mixed age and mixed gender, and they did not provide the same sort of gender-segregated space to talk about relationships and life, as was the case at the borehole. Instead, in these spaces conversations were often about agricultural processes or about politics.

Due to the interactions in which we participated in everyday chores, the people in the area were quite free to respond to our questions and provided information that they held dear to their lives on their role/perceived meanings of community, community participation, and orphans; the role they played in the establishment and running of the CDSSs and supporting the wellbeing and education of OVSs. The people around the CDSS seemed to be quite excited whenever we asked them about the ownership of the CDSS and what they felt their role should be. The other topic that many participants discussed freely and gave in their ideas concerned the processes the various NGOs, government, and CBOs, utilized in supporting OVSs.

We often had our meals after the students had dispersed from the school and walked back to their homes. During that time, we spent an hour or so to brief one another on what we had gathered in the morning and quickly note some of the themes that were emerging. Most structured interviews with village leaders, parents, teachers, students and other relevant participants were conducted in the afternoon and whenever

[5]*Dimba* is a small piece of land that is most times along a river bank where people plant some crops which they water using water canes or pails or buckets.

the respondents consented and felt comfortable, these interviews were recorded and then transcribed. In addition to the formal, semi-structured interviews listed in the table above, we conducted a number of follow-up interviews to get more information on the educational support the OVSs received from their guardians, teachers and any other persons.

The evening was a time where we each shared a full day's report. We shared notes; discussed the emerging themes related to perceptions that the participants and members of the community had on words like community, participation, and orphans. We also discussed what we had learnt about the establishment of the CDSS as well as the support that was being rendered to the OVSs in relation to their education. We then planned out the additional questions that should be asked and decided on the participants with whom we should follow up for the next day. These conversations were deliberately formed as spaces in which we worked to establish and maintain a full partnership among the researchers. Though I was older than the two other researchers and more experienced, the effort to destabilize my own expertise yielded tremendous fruit. We established strong rapport and were able to add to and question each other's findings easily and productively. This was particularly important in terms of hearing from my female colleague, as she was holding almost all of the interviews with women while we worked together. From her, I learned about the many issues to which I did not have easy research access because of my particular position and identity. Likewise, she learned from us about the activities and people with whom she did not have easy access in the community. We built together a much stronger ethnographic account than we ever could

have each built alone, but we also learned about our own biases, assumptions, and researcher strengths and weaknesses as we went along.

In order to track the data that was collected each day, we designed a data collection tally in which we were able to record the individual semi-structured interviews we conducted; classroom, school-ground, village and home-based observations made; informal interviews conducted; focus group discussions held, and documents reviewed. The tally also enabled us to know the sources of data and provided the opportunity for data triangulation, where such an approach was appropriate. Because there were three of us, the evening discussions were very important for talking out the themes that were emerging and refocussing our efforts. This was quite a rigorous exercise hence most often it usually took us up to late midnight, thanks to the cheap solar lamps that were donated to us by friends. We also made sure to find some time to transcribe the data we had recorded for some respondents. After every two weeks, we had to take some two days off from collecting more information in order to just critically look at the data.

I asked for permission to sometimes sit in a classroom in order to observe the time the teachers and students reported for class, how the teachers taught and handled the OVSs, and how the OVSs participated in class, for I often heard from the teachers that the OVSs were not very active in class and that teachers were often very harsh to students. I was the only one that went into classrooms to observe classroom sessions. I observed a disconnection between what most teachers stated during the semi-structured interviews about their ability to help the OVSs in their education and the treatment I observed during the class sessions as will be explained in Chapter 5. During the four

months that we stayed at Londola, I visited all classes from Form 1 to Form 4. Each class was visited twice in a week and each visit lasted for two hours. This gave me a total of 16 hours of class observation each month. School-ground observations were centered on the timeliness of students when coming to school while monitoring the participating OVSs, the interactions amongst the students and teachers, the interactions of the OVSs with fellow OVSs as well as with other students, and their dressing and reactions to such by teachers or students. I also observed and participated in two PTA meetings. We also held focus group discussions (FGD) on topics on which we needed more clarity, such as how the CDSS was established and the type of support that was provided to the CDSS and OVSs. We conducted two FGD cycles at Londola, one with the parents and local leaders and the other one with girls and the boys. However, during the FGDs, we made sure that participants were split into small groups taking into account gender, age and any leadership position they had, so that everyone was allowed to at least freely air his/her views.

While we were conducting semi-structured interviews, FDGs, and observations, I also spent time with the head teacher and asked him for some documents that were relevant to my study. These included: enrolment data; data on support being provided to OVSs (e.g., bursaries, scholarships, rules and regulations on use of school funds); minutes of meetings conducted with PTAs or School Management Committees; and any policy documents from the division or Ministry of Education headquarters on fees and bursaries.

However, at this secondary school, Londola, getting written information about the students' background information, recorded minutes for meetings that the school had

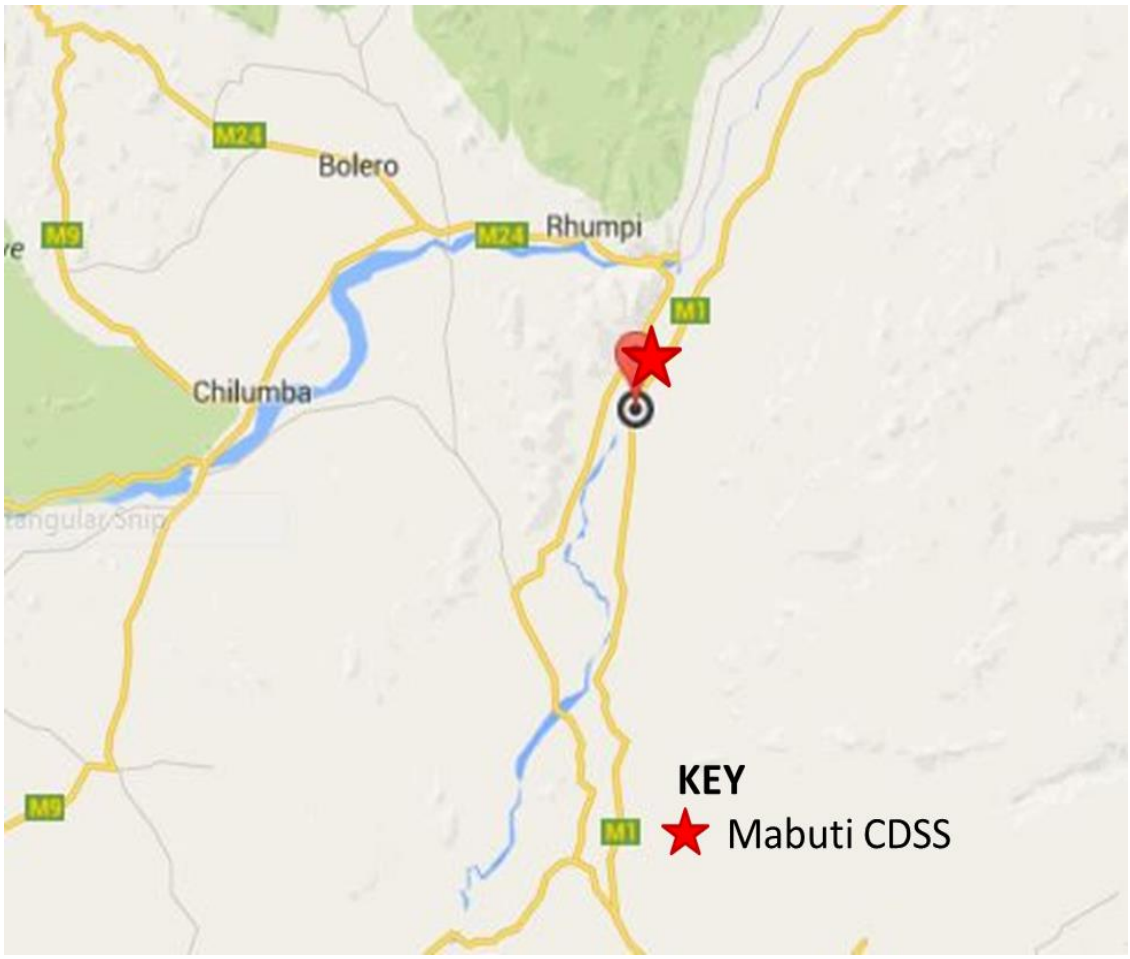
held with the parents, and policy documents from the Ministry on community participation was quite a big challenge because they were either poorly organized or not filed at all hence could not be traced. The head teacher never felt at ease when I asked for such documents for he knew they were difficult to find. I thus depended mostly on what he and other teachers said when I asked them questions on any of the above stated topics.

The basic quantitative survey was conducted towards the end of the field research at Londola. After living and collecting data from Londola for four months, I spent two weeks critically looking at the data to make further preliminary analysis of it and came up with major themes and sub-themes that emerged from the study. This was vital for me as I came up with a write up of ideas that we utilized in making comparisons with what we found in the second research site.

Following these two weeks of initial data immersion and analysis, I took a break of four weeks so that I could conduct a survey for Save the Children organization. I took this break since it was a time that the schools were not in session. This research targeted the Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Community Based Child Care Centers (CBCCs) that fell under the Early Childhood Development program. The research helped me to understand more on orphaned and vulnerable children and their lives with their guardians, as the CBOs and CBCCs were interventions that Save the Children had put in place to address some challenges that the OVCs faced. This research was concluded in October, and it was at the same time that the CDSSs were reopened.

In October 2012 I travelled with the research assistants to the second site, Mabuti CDSS, (see Figure 3) in Mzimba North (Rural) Education district in Northern Education Division.

Figure 3: Map of Mabuti CDSS



Just like in Londola, at Mabuti we lived in a village for four months in a house that was prepared for us by the village heads, school management committee members and head teacher of the CDSS. However, unlike in Londola, the people around this area seemed not to question the idea of us living in one house, as they arranged that we all

reside in a big three-bedroomed house with a sitting room, despite us telling them in advance that there will be two men and one woman amongst the research team.

Guided by what we did at the first research site, we easily drew up our intended list of research participants with whom to conduct structured and semi-structured interviews, participant observations and focus group discussions. The list comprised parents, teachers, students, community leaders and school committee members. By the time we were leaving Londola, various themes like a shrinking conception of the boundaries of community, individualism/capitalist crippling the extended family cultural concept, the role of leadership structures in these shifts, issues related to identity and belonging of OVSs in families and villages had emerged. For Mabuti, we thus defined areas in which our research needed to focus more attention in order for us to compare with what we found from the first site. At the same time, we did not want to miss existing differences, or narrow our focus so that we risked missing the themes that would have emerged naturally had we begun with Mabuti instead of Londola. As in Londola, for new and old themes alike, we identified and added participants whenever a particular theme emerged that needed more information. For example, on the establishment of the Mabuti CDSS, we had to add the Member of Parliament of the constituency. We also conducted a number of informal interviews to provide thick description on themes that were emerging so that we could understand the complex web of relationships that was emerging on community participation and the education of the OVSs (Geertz, 1973).

At Mabuti CDSS area, we again carried out the identification of the participants for semi-structured interviews purposively, depending upon the themes we were

tackling. For example, on the establishment of the CDSS, we enquired from the school management committee members about the people that were instrumental in establishing Mabuti CDSS, and as for the support provided to students by CBOs, we enquired from the chairperson, treasurer and secretary of the CBOs. For the students, we consulted the head teacher of Mabuti CDSS to provide data on the OVCs which guided us as we purposively selected sixteen orphaned and vulnerable students, (2 male and 2 female from each Form (class / grade) and also took into account potential gender and age differences in orphans' experiences). We also tried to ensure to have amongst the selected students some that lived with one parent, some that lived with extended relations, and others that were child headed. Unlike the head teacher of Londola CDSS, the head teacher of Mabuti CDSS was well organized in record keeping and had knowledge of his students' living situations. This helped us to quickly make the selection of the OVSs with whom we would conduct in-depth interviews. Again, in this area we failed to get a child-headed household that an OVS that was learning at Mabuti as there was none from the area. We also failed to interview an OVS from the CDSS surrounding community who was attending an elite secondary school, as all such children were far away during the school session. As for the teachers, we interviewed the class teacher for each Form, one of whom was a female teacher. A number of informal interviews were also conducted with other teachers. In this area we also provided feedback to the people on what we found in a manner that did not appear to be personal, threatening, or embarrassing by making issues to be points of conversation that led into more analytical depths.

The following table 2 provides details of the participants that were formally interviewed in Mabuti area:

Table 3: Mabuti CDSS participants interviewed (semi-structured interviews)

Participants	**Male**	**Female**
Orphan vulnerable secondary students from CDSS	8	8
Guardians / single parents	4	12
Teachers	3	1
Students from district secondary school	1	None
CDSS School committee members	1	1
Community Based Organization members	1	1
Religious official	1 reverend	none
Member of Parliament	1	none
Community leaders	1 senior group village head	none
Total	21	23

Waking up early in the morning to observe what the parents and the students did before the students went to school, how the students walked/ travelled to the CDSS and how the day was spent at school, became a norm in Mabuti as well. Unlike in Londola, in Mabuti there were three water sources: a borehole, a river and water taps. We visited all three sources repeatedly in order to get a feel of what women discussed when they

were at these three sources. The women and female students chose where to go depending upon the distance and time they had to fetch water as well as what they intended to utilize the water for. The boreholes were often placed at a central area of the village with a radius of 2 km but the water was somehow salty, the water taps were far from most villages (distance of 4-5 km) but the water was mostly used for drinking, while the river was close to some villages i.e. 1 km but as far as 5 km for other villages. The water from the river was mostly utilized for washing.

By the time we arrived at Mabuti in October, most men were busy tending to their tobacco nurseries which were along the river hence at times we went to the river to hold informal and semi-structured interviews. Here again we listened to the conversations, which mostly hinged on the tobacco prices and the impact tobacco money had on the morals of men and the numerous divorces that occurred because economic activities i.e. tobacco growing seemed to pre-occupy they minds. We learnt that most men, at times the participants even gave names of such men, turned into drinking and promiscuity after receiving their hard earned cash. Wherever appropriate, we enquired on how this affected the OVSs and their education. We collected information on their perceived meanings of community, community participation, and orphans; perceived role in the establishment and running of the CDSSs and supporting education of OVSs. The people around Mabuti CDSS also seemed to be quite excited whenever we brought up topics on ownership of the CDSS and what they felt their role should be; marriage and divorces; and orphaned children's identity and belonging. As with Londola, the other topic that many participants discussed freely and gave in their ideas concerned the

processes that the various NGOs, government, and CBOs utilized when identifying and supporting OVSs.

During most of the days we had to forgo lunch since the house where we were staying was located a bit far from the school and at the other end of the villages that surrounded the CDSS. Most of the time we had to share notes, discuss emerging themes, and compare what we collected with what we found at Londola CDSS in the evening and at times we made sure that the whole of the afternoon was just dedicated to writing what we had found in the field. Most semi-structured interviews with village leaders, parents, teachers, students and other relevant participants were conducted in the afternoon and wherever the respondents consented and felt comfortable, such interviews were recorded and later transcribed. In addition to the formal semi-structured interviews, we conducted a number of follow-up interviews to get more information on the educational support the OVSs received from the guardians, teachers and any other persons. We continued to track the data that was captured each day through the data collection tally that we had designed at Londola. Data transcription was also done for those respondents that had allowed to be recorded during interviews. After every two weeks, we had to take some two days off the field in order to just critically look at the data.

At Mabuti, I had also asked for permission to sit in classrooms in order to observe a class room session and see how the teachers were teaching and handling the OVSs and how the OVSs participated in class. I had aimed at making two observations of two hours each per week giving a total of 16 hours per month but failed due to time constraints as we had a large volume of data which we had to run through. I thus

managed 16 hours during the first and second month and 8 hours each for the last two months. The school-ground observations, just like in Londola, were centered on the timeliness of students and teachers when coming to school while monitoring the sampled OVSs, the interactions amongst the students and teachers, the interactions of the OVSs with fellow OVSs and with other students, and their dress and reactions to such by teachers or students. During the four months we were there, there was only one PTA meeting held, and we attended it. We participated in the building of a teacher's house by the various villages that were each assigned a particular day of the week to carry out the work. We also held two FGDs, one with the parents and local leaders and the other one with the girls and the boys. The FGDs were on how the CDSS was established and the type of support that was provided to the CDSS and OVSs. Here again, during the FGDs, we made sure that participants were split into small groups taking into account gender, age and any leadership position they had, so that everyone was allowed to at least freely air his/her views.

While we were conducting semi-structured interviews, FDGs, and observations, I spent time with the head teacher and asked him for some documents that were relevant to my study. These included: enrolment data; data on support being provided to OVSs (e.g., bursaries, scholarships, etc.); minutes of meetings conducted with PTAs or School Management Committees, and any policy documents from the division or Ministry of Education headquarters. Getting written information about the minutes of meetings the school had conducted with the parents was not easy as at times minutes were not recorded when such meetings were held. The biggest challenge was getting policy documents from the Ministry on community participation, i.e. roles of communities in

running the CDSSs. The head teacher flipped through all his files for the whole week and did not get any. He just explained to me what he knew he had heard from his colleagues. However, the head teacher was at ease sharing with me the available documents. In Mabuti CDSS area I also carried out a basic quantitative survey that targeted 32 OVSs that were randomly selected to get some numerical data on household composition and the type of support that they thought was vital for their schooling in the CDSSs.

As field data collection came to an end in the second site, I went to discuss some key issues that were raised by the people we had interviewed with some Ministry of Education and non-governmental officials in order to get a clear picture on the issues. This included the district education managers, education division managers and executive directors of some NGOs to discuss issues like the changing dynamics of community as perceived by the people in the areas where I conducted research, the processes that were being utilized in identifying the OVSs that were being supported through bursaries and scholarships, the support being provided to OVSs and the implications on the OVSs depending upon with whom the OVSs lived and the likely impact the dependence of GoM on communities in establishing and running the CDSSs will have on the lives of OVSs.

Data analysis

In qualitative research, there are different approaches to analyzing data. Merriam (2001, 2002) identifies four types of analysis: ethnographic analysis, narrative analysis, phenomenological analysis, and constant comparative method. I utilized ethnographic analysis and constant comparative method, which allowed me to draw themes and sub-

themes across multiple data sources (recordings, notes, documents, various groups of people). I constantly compared and condensed them to create a rich story of the meanings and practices of the research participants around community participation (Huberman & Miles, 1994). From what I had learnt and observed during my preliminary dissertation research, my main focus was to understand any relationships that might exist between the perceived meanings participants had from across the three levels (school, district and national) and from the two research sites on concepts like orphan, community, participation and the support they provided to CDSSs and education of the OVSs in the CDSSs.

Data analysis was thus done simultaneously with data collection, which allowed for daily, weekly, and monthly reflections, summaries (write-ups) and analytic memos (Erickson, 1986; Shaw, 1999). It is critical to make sure that issues that emerge each day are properly documented for they usually show a direction of what is taking place on a particular theme (Morse, 1994). Actually, data analysis happened daily throughout the field research period as well as after field research. This analysis was aimed at understanding and explaining the experiences and support or lack of support the OVCs underwent as a result of the perceived meanings the various participants attributed to words such as community, community participation, orphan, etc. In essence, my analysis was done at individual, family, school, village, and national level while looking at the lines of enquiry that we had developed from the data we had collected from interviews, observations, and focus group discussions. The research had very rich data that included descriptions of people, activities, interactions, and settings, as well as direct quotes from people. From this rich data we noted trends, and located and traced points of agreements

and discrepancies amongst people within each research site as well as across the two research sites. Early trends included: gendered type of working and lack of belonging of orphans in both sites, identity challenges of orphans in the second site unlike the first site, nomadic nature of orphan children in the second site, and so forth. I also made more enquires into themes that seemed to present divergent views from participants at different levels. For instance, communities were talked about as a rich resource by the national and non-governmental level personnel while the community members themselves thought they were down-graded to poor and illiterate people by the national and non-governmental members of staff.

The first phase of data processing involved cycle coding using the following main coding methods: (a) Attribute coding for essential information about the data and demographic characteristics of the participants for future management and reference, e.g. school name; age; gender; ethnicity; interview transcript; field note; document; time frame; (b) Structural coding that acted as a labeling and indexing device that allowed us to quickly access data that was relevant to a particular theme we were analyzing within the interviewee transcripts or notes; (c) Descriptive coding that summarized some basic topic / theme that we noted out of a passage. I actually generated the codes first which were checked by the two research assistants after which a discussion ensued on the coding. The research assistants also helped me to either add more codes or merge codes as we saw fit. They also assisted in reviewing labeling and indexing I had done on the transcripts /notes according to the themes that we had come up. This constant member checking was very effective in streamlining data for a particular theme.

Coding of data was first carried out in the first site, and then the same codes were utilized in the second site while at the same time we generated other codes in the second site for other themes /sub-themes that emerged. The developed contact summary and document summary sheets which indicated the main concepts, themes / sub-themes, issues, and questions that were generated from the key participants and documents soon after reviewing the field notes and write-ups were a great help in data coding. We inductively and deductively analyzed the content of interviews or field notes for themes and recurring patterns of such themes in both sites.

The second phase of data processing involved more coding and once again listening to the interviews that were conducted, reading the transcriptions and observation notes for further in-depth analysis to identify more themes that were emerging. I also did NVIVO coding from the interviews I did conduct with the students, parents, teachers and community leaders as well as did more structural and descriptive coding. More follow-ups were carried out on issues that emerged as I did more structured data analysis, and I also interviewed some NGOs and other development partners who provided support to the orphans and vulnerable secondary students. These interviews were coded in the same manner.

Finally, I reviewed the data gathered at the two research sites while looking at it through the three levels of social scale (community and school; district and division; and ministry /national). Using the themes generated at each research site, I conducted a cross-case synthesis to compare findings across the two CDSSs. For example I looked at what the government officials stated regarding the establishment of a CDSS, compared with what I found in the data that I had collected on the establishment of Londola CDSS,

this again was compared with the data I had obtained on the establishment of Mabuti CDSS. Another example is on identity and belonging of the OVSs. I looked at the data from Londola that explained what participants stated about the word "orphan" where the OVSs were living, with whom, who was responsible for their daily support, etc. and compared this against what was found at Mabuti. This enabled me to highlight similarities and differences across the two CDSSs and their surrounding communities, districts and divisions. The more I did this cross-case analysis, the more I discovered that there were a number of similarities and differences amongst OVSs in the way they lived and did their education. For instance, there was a common motivational factor for those OVSs that were achieving well in class regardless of the different environments that they were found in. In some cases I noted dissimilar themes that were occurring at different levels. For example, the government, non-governmental organizations and international development partners at district and national level looked at "community members", through extended family system, as a resource for taking care of OVSs. They thus made their programs to support OVCs while the OVCs stayed with their families. In contrast, people at village level thought that community cohesion was disintegrating or growing less strong with the introduction of capitalism / individualism gratification in life hence family members are no longer as supportive as they used to do in the past. The community members thought that there is need for the organizations to revisit their programs and the support they rendered to the OVCs.

Similarly, in observations, it was mostly the parents / guardians who had students at the CDSSs that attended the meetings called upon by teachers and village heads to discuss development issues at the CDSSs. This was contrary to what was reported to me

by the Ministry of Education officials and international organization representatives that a broader array of people living in the areas surrounding the CDSSs attended such meetings. Most observations indicated that communities members discussed the poor quality of education rendered at the CDSSs due to lack of infrastructure like physical science and biology laboratories, while the government was generally concerned with increased access of students to secondary school. Such divergent areas of focus by the different levels provided more lines of enquiry at each level as more data analysis was carried out across the levels and across the sites.

One other area that I found important during data analysis was the complex way in how some actions under one theme had multiple impacts, both positive and negative on the OVSs according to the settings and times. For example, material support to OVSs. At times the material support, i.e. school uniform, fees, shoes etc., to the OVSs seemed very ideal to improve the schooling of the OVSs, but at times the process that was utilized in identifying and providing the items to the OVSs led to further marginalization and stigmatization of the OVSs. I thus went about analyzing such themes in accordance to their positioning while looking at the level of analysis. This was vital in order to understand community participation in the education of OVSs in CDSSs. It allowed me to critically examine how the perceptions and meanings of community participation are appropriated by the members of the community, students, teachers and parents/guardians in their daily lives. The interrelationships and interactions amongst various themes at different levels of analysis indicated that community participation is not a simple and straightforward case, as it is at times presented by those

advocating it, when it comes to supporting the education of OVCs. These differences will be explored in the next two chapters.

Limitations and challenges in the study

There were four principal limitations and challenges that I experienced during my research, some of which are shared by many field researchers and others less commonly confronted. First, not all data that was obtained through the semi-structured interviews, observations, and focus group discussions that involved parents / guardians, students, village heads, teachers, other key participants and other government and non-governmental officials is included in this research. What is written in this dissertation is filtered through my imagination, my position in the schools and villages, and my eyes and those of my associates. It is a limitation that doctoral students confront in that we cannot include all the text from the many interviews and informal conversations we conduct so that the participants' words can be even more prominent.

Secondly, Creswell (1998, 2008) defines quantitative research as a type of research that is explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics). I conducted a very basic survey in each of the two sites, which could not provide for any generalizations or correlation between each particular support the students received or not received with their performance in school. A longitudinal type of research would allow for such analysis (Demerath, 2006).

Thirdly, I faced financial constraints that affected data collection. I went with the two research associates to Londola CDSS and worked together for two months, and then I had to release them due to insufficient funds for my research. Thus, I was doing data

collection alone during the last two months in Londola. However, after completing data collection in Londola, I re-engaged them for data collection in the north, at Mabuti CDSS, for another two months. Their absence during part of this research meant that I missed out on their insights during the debates that we used to have in the evenings on the themes that were emerging. In addition, it was particularly difficult in Londola and Mabuti for female students to feel comfortable talking with me. Without the female research assistant, I certainly missed out on a number of important discussions among the female students.

The final challenge hinged on what Patton (2002) and Lincoln & Guba (1985) describes as the naturalistic nature of qualitative research while referring to its non-interference with the natural setting of the subjects under study and taking account of the context or setting. However, my methods of data collection required direct interaction with individuals, on a one-on-one basis or in a group setting, thereby affected the natural setting that was being explored. The OVSs at times interpreted my being present as a sign that they might get some financial support. This is because they knew that I had once worked as the executive director of a famous organization that was working in girls' education and provided scholarships to orphaned and vulnerable students in primary schools. In dealing with this, I tried to explain to them the possible ways / sources through which they could obtain support, i.e. from government bursaries and other non-government organizations, but they may have still given responses when talking to me or my assistants that they thought would lead to support. At times, due to the gravity of the situation in which we found some of the OVSs, we opted to provide some support to them in the form of food, clothes and school uniforms.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explained the process of data collection and how it was analyzed. I have also highlighted the limitations and challenges I met during the data collection and analysis. However, despite the limitations and challenges, the rigorous exercise through which this data collection and data analysis was conducted provides a good foundation for examining the perceptions on community and community participation on OVSs schooling in the CDSSs. This is what is discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. In chapter 4, I will discuss the changing power dynamics of the family and the community and how these can impact on the education of the OVSs in secondary school. I will further show that nowadays the scope of the concept of community is shrinking since the introduction of the "tables" and this affects community (multiply defined) participation in secondary education. The chapter will also highlight how participation of community members from within the family is affected by the unplanned boundaries that are being set through processes that are utilized by local and international non-governmental organizations in supporting the OVSs (such as individually-targeted bursaries) as well as the existing lack of power and community marginality of the students. I will also outline the differences in leadership, gender relations, family relations and material changes that affect the cohesion that is believed to exist in communities, which has a bearing on the education of the OVSs.

CHAPTER FOUR: ORPHAN AND VULNERABLE STUDENTS' SUPPORT AND THE SHRINKING CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the governance systems (villages, country, and IDOs) in which the OVCs, their guardians, other members of the community and institutions are located. The chapter will provide an explanation that, across a broad range of actors and socio-cultural and economic practices, there has been a change in the social and moral conception of belonging due to what is referred to by research participants as the "introduction of the table,"[6] and the changes in local leadership. The base of the community that is to provide support to OVSs is shrinking. This, I argue, is a crucial aspect of the experience of community in Malawi. The consequences of this shrinkage can be quite harsh in terms of the community's capacity and willingness to support OVSs.

Into this breach step the GoM and a range of IDOs with programs—usually individually targeted—designed to support OVCs' school attendance. This chapter examines what interventions are being undertaken by these external actors in an effort to support OVSs, provides some thoughts on synergies and tensions among the efforts being taken by various actors to support OVSs better futures, and argues that a new approach to international development is likely necessary in order to avoid creating additional social distance and stigma for OVSs. Particularly, I argue that most current

[6]Field interview with parent describing individualism that has crept into families where each father and mother cares for his/her own biological children due to a number of factors including economic, health, land scarcity and culture changes.

IDO and GoM efforts to support OVSs are primarily focused on and shaped by the policies of the donors who are funding the projects. As such, they can fail to support, or even actively harm, OVSs as individuals, as members of families and communities, and as a group of marginalized people.

I begin the chapter by defining key terms, explore shrinking community perceptions of belonging and governance, then move to examine external mechanisms for OVSs support, and conclude with a brief analysis of the effects of these interventions on the core concept of OVSs' belonging.

Key concepts in OVS support

Community

In Chapter 1, I reviewed the diversity of definitions of "community" that are used by different institutions and actors in international development. I noted that the definitions used by national and international actors are generally not critical of the concept of community in that they assume that communities are cohesive and singular units in which relations of power do not play a central role. For example, the government of Malawi defining community as a group of people having something in common which will lead them to act together to achieve as they aim at fulfilling their common interest. Such definitions have been critiqued by a number of scholars including Cornish & Ghosh, 2007; Friedemann-Sanchez, 2006; Mansuri & Rao, 2004; and Pryor, 2005. These scholars have argued that definitions of community must take into account social, economic, and cultural power dynamics that exist among any group of people which does have direct bearing on the cohesiveness and functioning of the group.

However, international and national responses to the increasing numbers and needs of OVCs have generally not taken these critiques of community into account. The most common current national and international responses to supporting OVSs' schooling are very individualized and primarily consist of giving school bursaries and/or writing and learning supplies and other goods to individual children identified as orphaned (most often double orphans - children who have lost both mother and father). This usually is narrowly focused on the needs that the individual child needs while learning in /at school. This approach to supporting OVCs reflects a definition of community in which there are no internal conflicts and in which power dynamics do not exist: these responses assume that everyone in the community will recognize that these particular children have special needs different than those of other children, will support an external body providing individual children with direct support aimed only at a single child, and will allow the child to keep the resources directed at her/him. Furthermore, these approaches are predicated on the notion that the child is supported by adults who do not have needs of their own, and therefore that only the needs of the child must be met. In principle, it is out of context culturally as it does not consider kinship and the changes that are occurring.

These assumptions are not supported by above outlined critiques of the concept of community, and they are also not supported by existing research on the effects of targeting specific needy individuals who are part of communities with individualized material support. The problems raised by such assumptions are two-fold. First, as has been found by a wide range of studies, targeting individuals to receive material support often leads to unintended social visibility and stigmatization of the individual, and may

undermine local responses to children and their guardians (Foster, Laugharn & Wilkinson-Maposa, 2010; Waal, Edstrom & Mamdani, 2008). Second, the issue of who to target raises a host of conceptual and practical problems, including if, why, and how to differentiate between children who are affected by orphan-hood and those who are orphans and at the same time affected by poverty in various ways (Nshakira & Taylor, 2010; Waal, Edstrom & Mamdani, 2008), and whether and how to create categories of family-level vulnerability or need. For example, Richter and Desmond (2008) found out that in South Africa, by many measures the "orphans" usually targeted to receive international school support resources are not actually the neediest children in most communities because there are other children who either have more unstable living situations (and may be invisible to external support structures because of their high mobility) or live in households that are even more resource-insecure (often in grandmother-headed households). Campbell et al (2010) found similar outcomes in their review of Demographic and Health Survey data from eleven countries in the Southern Africa region, and argue that poverty (which almost always had an impact household-wide, not at the individual level) was a more important predictor of negative outcomes than orphan-hood per se.

Despite these concerns, the most visible and widespread international and national NGO response to improving OVCs' wellbeing has been to fund school bursaries at the secondary level (currently provided to OVSs by the GoM, a wide range of companies and non-governmental organizations funded by IDOs and other funding streams, and individuals), and to a lesser extent, conditional cash transfers to families with OVCs who are in primary school (currently provided to families by IDOs funding

NGOs). These external groups think about providing their support individually to selected OVSs and through a defined selection process that calls on "the community" and/or "the school" to identify the individuals who will receive support. This approach has a number of challenges, including further stigmatization of the OVSs through public identification processes that often occur in classrooms or public meetings, and unintended consequences related to further stigmatization of the OVSs by the people with whom they are staying, who do not receive support.

My research revealed that the word community was systematically interpreted differently by different people within social structures, though there were some common elements of the definition amongst particular groups of people. For instance, the MoEST officials interpreted "community" to mean all the people that lived around the CDSS catchment area and also including all the other individuals or groups of people that the people from around the CDSS may contact for support – including any other organizations. As one education official said:

> You know, it is the community that comes to us and requests for CDSS to be established in their area. You see, most of the members living in the community are illiterate but they have some of their children that have gone to school and are working in towns. The people from the community are expected to seek financial as well as technical support from those who are living in towns or in other countries but their origins is the CDSS catchment area. Such individuals are part of the community. At times it is these literate individuals that send the application to us. We, as government, expect the educated people from the area

to support such development endeavors. It is their area that will develop if many children go further with education (June, 2012)

Here, we see that officials' definitions of the community include everyone in a catchment area, but also make assumptions that the leaders in that area should be the "educated people." There is also an unproblematized assumption that the will of the educated is perfectly aligned with the will of the rest of the people that live in the village; hence, they will always collectively work together to ensure that education is provided to the children in their areas. The other challenge with this view is that it assumes educated people see education in a positive way for all children and thereby want to assist every child in the village.

On the other hand, the District Education Managers (DEMs) and teachers at CDSSs interpreted the word community as people that lived around the primary schools from where the students come from. Some of these people might, at a particular time, be staying away from the CDSS catchment area but were still part of the community as long as they had once lived in the area or their relatives came from the catchment area. It is being assumed in this definition that because these people came from an area and lived together at one point, they must still share ideas and knowledge and identify problems and find solutions together. Thus, the officials are assuming that people still belong to their supposedly home area (the village of their father's or mother's birth in patrilineal and matrilineal areas, respectively), regardless of where they live now. The education officials further stated that the community could be people from a particular church, school or village surrounding a particular school that may include

businesspersons, and government or non-government officials residing in the area but who are originally not from the area. One teacher at Londola CDSSs stated:

> All of us living in this area belong to this community. When there is a funeral near this school, we all go to attend otherwise people will question our morals and integrity. You see that borehole there…….(speaking while pointing at the borehole that is situated about 1 km from the school)? We all draw our drinking water from there. When it breaks down we are all asked to contribute funds in order to repair it. Of course at times we ask help from those children that are working in town but come from here because they belong to this community. (November, 2012)

This definition of community was thus very broad, including both people born in the community who no longer reside there, and people who were not born in the community but currently reside there. The interpretation of community provided by IDO partners was similar, with a particular emphasis on government or non-government officials who were living in a particular area/village. This interpretation meant that when GoM and IDO partners talked of communities supporting OVSs, they imagined a wider base of potential support than did community members. They included people and organizations living in the area (whether they were initially from the area or not), as well as those who were born in the village but not living in the area (such as sons and daughters of parents from the village who were working in town but who had contact with the people from a particular school). This definition implied that the community could easily mobilize resources since it comprised some people that were working and had easy access to financial and material resources. Furthermore, the community could

also support the OVS in their immediate educational needs because there were also locally-situated NGO and government "human resources" (such as teachers, education officials, and NGO education project officers) that could easily be tapped from.

Local government officials from the two CDSSs conceptualized the basis of belonging a bit differently. They generally considered it to mean where someone's family came from, but once the person was not physically present, they were expected to play different roles in the communities than those who were present. This notion of community provides a bit more room to think about the type of support particular individuals can provide than the government officials' definition because it acknowledged that once people are not living in a particular community, their sense of belonging to it and their willingness to engage in participatory processes related to the community often fade. This definition was still, however, limited by geographical and physical boundaries.

In contrast, parents and students frequently defined community as "people who originated from and lived in a particular defined area, i.e., from a particular village." This definition excluded those working in the area who did not originate from the area (such as government and NGO officials), and it most often also did not include those from the village who were working in town and thus geographically absent. Their philosophy about those sons and daughters that originated from the area hinged on "out of sight out of mind," and they complained that such children rarely remembered their homes except when there is an event or mishap like a funeral. One school committee member remarked:

> The teachers and the other government and non-governmental members of staff are not part of this community. They are here for work and will leave anytime their work is through. You cannot bank upon them for they just come for a short time. On those children originally coming from this area but living in town, it is these non-government organizations that are reminding us that they could be of help when it comes to development work we are initiating around the school. Otherwise mmmhh (pauses) they are not to be counted upon. They can help at times but at other times they can also not help…you cannot query them. (December 15, 2012)

Summarizing these definitions of community, there were three particularly significant differences. These included:

1) whether or not people living in the community whose families did not originate from the area, including teachers, were recognized as part of the community;
2) whether or not people who were born in the village but did not currently live there were recognized as part of the community; and
3) whether or not organizations and their staff and resources were considered part of the community.

Funding and governance bodies consistently included one or more of these categories in their definitions of community, which resulted in assessments of community resources and capacity that were much more expansive than those of community members and that tended to valorize, or at least emphasize, the role of these "external" actors and institutions in leading village responses to problems. One example of this emphasis was the common assumption on the part of NGOs and the GoM that

educated people in town who came from a particular village would initiate the application for a CDSS in an area. Rural people from the area in which research was being conducted, in contrast, almost never included these groups in their definitions of community. They stated that their definition was based on the reality of uneven or absent involvement of these groups in daily life or in meeting the regular needs of the village.

While the various groups defined community in different ways, it was quite revealing when I tried to understand the perceptions the parents and students had about how the GoM and NGOs defined community. During the focus group discussions and informal interviews, these groups expressed that they felt that the GoM and NGOs defined community as primitive poor people from the village who are not intelligent, do not know much and are not capable of contributing anything towards the school except labor (molding bricks and hauling sand). They stated that this is why the government and development partners asked the people surrounding the CDSS to only provide labor and mold bricks and never listened to them whenever they provided any suggestions on a particular project that was being implemented, for example, how best to identify and support OVSs at the CDSS. One parent narrated:

> You think we matter? We are not regarded as anything by these NGO and Government officials. They do not ask about our ideas whenever they are bringing things to us. They just tell us what to do. You know most of us in this village have not gone far with education so they think we cannot give them sensible ideas on their programs. You know, even when it comes to selection of students to be assisted in terms of school fees, they do not even ask us nor do they ask the chief and yet those children are living with us in the villages. They

select scholarship beneficiaries on their own and they always think they know better! (October, 2012)

Such varying interpretations of community seem to have an effect on the way the OVSs are being supported in the CDSS. The GoM and NGOs are convinced that the community will be able to raise some resources from its members, who are diverse and who come from a wide geographical coverage, including organizations located in the area and people who were born in the village but now work in the city. In other words, the GoM and IDOs expect the community to support the OVSs while this so-called community expects the government and development organizations to help these students, as they (the people from the village) regard themselves as poor – and in fact are so labeled by the government and development organizations.

The GoM and IDOs are sending mixed signals to the people living around the CDSSs. The people around the CDSSs feel on the one hand that the GoM and IDOs judge them as backwards, rural, poor, and uneducated. They know they are materially handicapped and also view them as "deficient" in their own education. They are therefore told to play a limited role in supporting the CDSSs, a role that is mostly confined to provision of manual labor during the construction of school infrastructure like classrooms where the students learnt. At the same time, the GoM and IDOs then also seem to expect that these materially and educationally "poor" villagers will be able to effectively mobilize support from organizations and from village "expatriates" to help with community-wide efforts like CDSSs.

At the same time, the villagers made it clear that they were not able to effectively mobilize these external resources, and that there was little opportunity for them to

mobilize or utilize the "funds of knowledge" (Gonzalez Moll & Amanti, 2013) that they had locally which could have been used to support OVSs and broader school improvement. These "funds" included very precise understandings of children's living situations, the history of land and education in the area, and recognition of institutional strengths and weaknesses in existing schools. Communities were thus positioned as being at once backwards and powerless, and at the same time expected to draw on hidden reserves and to source funds from extended community members to support OVCs.

In these patterns of mobilization and demobilization of village supports for CDSSs, it is difficult to clearly point out who takes the ownership of providing for the OVSs. Neither did international nor national organizations nor villagers explicitly talked about the caring of the OVSs as an issue that requires collective responsibility and even efforts to collectively support the school could not be met. The OVSs were thus left with either support provided to them individually by an external organization or support provided usually only by the people with whom they were staying. To further complicate matters, only OVSs usually received direct support from HIV/AIDS-related projects, which identified these children as particularly vulnerable. In building the CDSS, the requests of the government and the practices I observed indicated that there was no thought given to OVSs and any particular needs they might have while building or establishing or maintaining the CDSS, as the development of the school was not viewed as an AIDS-related project.

While little, if any, attention was paid to OVCs in the construction or planning of the CDSSs, there was similarly little attention given to how particular relational

dynamics between the CDSS and various factions of the community would affect OVCs access to and improved academic performance in the two CDSSs in which I worked. This issue was more evident in Londola, where during interviews and FGDs I learnt that during the establishment of the CDSS, all the people from the surrounding villages, regardless of their religious background and having or not having children learning at primary schools, participated in the molding of the bricks and supplying of sand and water during construction. One school committee member from Londola CDSS explained:

> Our village chiefs from the surrounding villages mobilized us to mold the bricks that were used to construct the school blocks. I remember each village was asked to mold 75,000 bricks. From each village, we all came in large numbers and accomplished this task within a very short time. You know, we all wanted our children to access secondary school education, even those who did not have children at primary schools, of course except for very old parents (*speaks while laughing*) participated in this exercise. Some of us from Muslim background did not mind about the fact that the school was being constructed at a land that belonged to a Christian denomination! We thought this school belonged to us all. (July, 2012)

The above narrated scenario seems to indicate a bounded definition of community in which rural people are valued primarily as low-skilled laborers. At the same time, among the rural people who lived in the proposed CDSS's catchment area, there was a strong identification as part of a broad community of geographically-present people who all felt that the new school would benefit them and they were therefore

willing to engage in school development in whatever manner was allowed to them including identification of OVSs to be supported by organizations, and decisions in selecting learners to the CDSS.

In the beginning, the CDSS represented the promise of potential access for all youths (and through them, their families) to a better future. However, as soon as the school was established and the students were selected to the CDSS, this sense of community access to and benefit from the school narrowed rapidly, and it was only the parents whose children were selected to the CDSS who were viewed as responsible for providing material and economic support to the school and emotional and academic support to the students. The only other help received by the CDSS and students was provided by the religious institution on whose land the CDSS was constructed.

In Londola, the word community evolved to mean parents that have students enrolled at the CDSS and the Christian religious denomination on whose land the CDSS was constructed.

The result of this narrowing was particularly painful for OVSs, as many of them who were not from the CCAP church lost the base of support they might have received from family members to attend the school, and on top of that, the narrowing of the CDSS's base of support also led to the school increasing the hardships to be faced by any poor students trying to attend. This was explained to me by the head teacher:

> People here are problematic. They do not want development. When we ask them to come and mold bricks in order to construct teacher's houses, they do not show up! We have thus resolved to requesting those parents / guardians that have children here at the school to contribute development fund of K2,800 every term

> which we utilize in hiring labor to mold bricks as well as buying materials and building the infrastructure. At times the church does support with some funds that well-wishers donate….it is too bad! (October, 2012)

This situation presented here by the head teacher is in direct contrast to the definition of community provided by some scholars and most government and international organizations, that portray the community as all-encompassing of a physical area and everyone in it, whose people are related and are automatically responsible for one another. This definition might have been historically correct since in the past villagers in Malawi thought about belonging to a village and a clan. There was a strong notion of extended family as people felt more closely bound to clans. Whenever anything happened in one clan that required support, the rest of the members from the clan came in to assist. This notion has faded, however, as will be described in the upcoming chapter, and has been under constant attack by the continued loss of people to AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, road accidents, and migration, among other threats to wellbeing.

The situation at Londola CDSS was a bit different from that of Mabuti CDSS; therefore, the understanding of community in relation to the school was different. For instance, parents of the students learning at Mabuti CDSS from the surrounding villages continued to construct teachers' houses each year and the school utilized the school development fund, which was smaller than that of Londola, to purchase teaching and learning materials. In contrast to Mabuti, the parents of the students learning at Londola CDSS had stopped to construct teachers' houses and the school had to utilize the school

development fund to try to build one teacher's house and use the same development fund to buy teaching and learning materials.

Though the shape of parental support took different forms at the two schools, support for the CDSS after it was established was in the end restricted to parents of current students in both locations. Looking at the support provided to the CDSSs and to OVSs by the community in both sites suggests that the definition of community in relation to secondary education has not aligned with the all-encompassing, largely geographically-based definition that people often adopt when talking about FPE and their local primary school, but instead has grown to encompass only the nuclear families of the students who are attending the CDSS. This provides a very small base of support for the CDSS, especially if they do not want to charge exorbitant school fees.

The concomitant shrinking of the perceived composition of the community that will support OVCs and the community that will support the CDSSs leaves OVSs in a double bind. This has led the OVSs to in turn focus their future on themselves and their education, as they do not have anyone whom they think they can rely upon.

The narrowing of community support for the CDSSs has immediate and direct impact on OVSs, and generally marginalizes them further from the school by shifting responsibility for financing the school, first from the government to the community, and then from the villages in the CDSS's catchment area onto the families of enrolled students and students themselves. For example, at Londola due to the selection of students to the CDSS that was done by the CCAP, a number of students from other religions and denominations (Muslim, Catholic, etc.) were left out. The parents from such groups thus got frustrated and never participated again in any school development

work, including molding bricks for extra classroom blocks. Not only did they not participate, but given the Christian history of schooling in the area, particularly Muslim families became wary of whether the CDSS was for them and what curriculum would be taught there.

The end result was that the CDSS asked for a large amount of development funds from each enrolled student. Most of the OVSs could not manage to pay, and they ended up either dropping out of school or engaging in very heavy piece work. From my observations, most of the OVSs that I had interacted with had engaged in piece work after school during school days or weekends. They always said that they had to work hard in order to succeed. This spirit of working hard was instilled in them by their guardians and some organizations through counseling.

One international organization, during my research, brought some role models to school to talk to their scholarship recipients about what they also went through during their lives (from the talk I gathered they were also orphans). The message was that through hard work, resilience and perseverance they had managed to complete their secondary education and were now working as teachers, nurses and bank tellers. Here again I saw how modeling and counseling painted these children's future as bright, but only if they took full responsibility, and not necessarily the community, for their educational performance and outcomes. In other words, counseling and modeling also focused on OVSs not having anyone to depend on but themselves, and on the sacrifices of going to school as being their best chance for a better life.

While the shrinking of the CDSS community is leading to reduction in number and size of possible sources of support for OVSs, the situation is exacerbated by the

"introduction of the table" which means that each parent focusses on his/her nucleus family, and the perceived meanings of the word "orphans." Many scholars (Foster, 1998; Mtika, 2001) and institutions, including the GoM, contend that existing extended family relations are ideal for taking care of OVCs. The GoM has gone further by not advocating for the establishment of orphanages despite the high HIV/AIDS rate that is leaving many children without father and mother. There are good reasons for such an advocacy, but they are premised on the notion that children will be taken care of by the extended family relations, and that such care is preferable in child outcomes than institutionalization (MGWCCS, 2006). However, from the research I conducted it is being revealed that "extended" families are not particularly extended any longer. They have largely disintegrated into individual nuclear entities such that each family cares for their own only. One school committee member respondent from Mabuti explained this in the following way:

> Life is no longer the same! It used not to be so, not so long ago. I remember when I went to secondary school in 1982, we used to eat together – all the children from my two uncle's families. We were given food (nsima) in a big plate and we could call and wait for each other and eat together. This meant nobody could stay hungry even if they did not have food in their home. Such was the life until the introduction of multipartyism. You see there is too much individualism nowadays …it is this democracy. Each individual thinks of himself or herself and his own biological children! Each family has to fend for itself. There is no urge to share with others! If the life we are living today was what it was before multiparty democracy era [pre-1994] then I would not have been

> educated. My father had no money when I was selected to go to Chaminade National Secondary School. Had it not been for my uncle, the young brother of my father, I should be a home dweller. Never would I have been a teacher, not at all! You see in those days the people cared so much and they would not have allowed seeing a child of their brother languishing at home while they had some resources with which they could help! But not today! People do not mind about others, they mind about their own children! (November, 2012)

This was further highlighted by Roy Hauya, a social scientist that wrote in *The Daily Times* on 24th August, 2014 on "Population size or population quality?" He argued that Malawian education had abandoned its indigenous knowledge, wisdom, and skills that inculcated in people the values of duty to community that formed the core of Malawian social relations:

> To start with, Malawi abandoned priceless indigenous knowledge, skills and wisdom in areas of health, agriculture and education which today are being revived through research to inform policy and practice when this treasure should have been preserved. Traditional and religious education, with all its limitations, taught values of hard work, respect for leadership, patriotism, and duty to community and nation.

Hauya further argues that it is this type of current education that has led to the creation of negative competition amongst the people and diminished *uMunthu;*[7] that is, a

[7] The significance of this concept in certain international development circles today can be seen by the selection of *Ubuntu*, a word in several African languages that is synonymous with *uMunthu*, as the theme of the 2015 Comparative and International Education Society conference in Washington, DC.

character endowed in a person that includes humility, love, caring, respect, and loyalty. *uMunthu* is characterized by caring for one another, and the values historically indicated through sharing and inclusion at the communal pot. During one of the conferences held by academics in Lilongwe, it was highlighted that lack of *uMunthu* is a social cancer that is crippling Malawi and leading to people not supporting marginalized people, including orphans, girls, and elderly people in extreme poverty, and people with disabilities.

There are many potential reasons for, and many debates about, what is causing the decline in *uMunthu* and the shift toward "the table" of the nuclear family. Certainly, the effects of AIDS and the loss of so many adults to the disease, the increasing periods of food insecurity since 1994 (caused by climate change and by changes to agricultural policies), changes in religious practices, rising economic inequality, the monetization of many aspects of daily life, and changes in the socio-political ecology of Malawi have all played a part in this change. By many measures, Malawians and many other Africans are living more precarious lives now than they were in the 1970s (Arrighi, 2002), and there are clear data indicating that people's sense that "the table" of familial support and care has shrunk radically since 1994 (Devereaux, 1999; Kendall, 2007).

Given these noted changes, though still understudied, it can readily be surmised that relying on community participation to assure OVSs livelihoods and educational opportunities may be problematic whenever programs aimed at supporting OVSs are being initiated with the assumption that community participation will result in equal support for all community members.

Orphan

In examining the interpretations made by international organizations about certain people and structures, it is also imperative to discuss the perceived meaning of "orphan" and its influence on the OVSs' education. The impact of the school environment on the daily lives of the OVSs and the positioning in Londola and Mabuti of who counts as an orphan has had a direct influence on the students' performance in school. I would also like to argue that the research suggests that the perceived meanings of some words like orphans have a definite impact (sometimes positive, sometimes negative) on the support rendered by extended families to the OVSs. These perceived meanings have become increasingly salient in students', community members', teachers', and NGOs' behavior as overall scarcity of land, food, and other basic resources expands (Devereaux et al, 2006).

Orphan is a common word in Malawi and is often interpreted differently by different groups of people. In the course of conducting field research I noted that there are three main definitions of the word orphan.

Firstly, the GoM and most IDOs define an orphan as "someone that is under 18 years of age who has lost either one parent (father of mother) or both the father and mother" (GoM, 2003, p. 16). While the government defines an orphan as someone with no parents, the chiefs and parents from Londola CDSS during interviews interpreted the word orphan (*masiye* in the Chichewa language spoken in southern and central regions of Malawi) as someone "belonging nowhere," someone who does not have anyone whom she/he can claim she belongs to as narrated by one chief:

> An orphan is someone who does not have someone that can claim him/her to be his or hers. You see, whenever there are funds that are brought to the village and some people just embezzle because they say that such money does not have an owner. They do not care at all. But here in the village we regard a child as a real orphan who has lost both the father and the mother or someone who has lost either a mother or a father but the one that has lost a mother is worst off because it is the mother that cares for a child and ensures that he/she (the child) has everything that is needed for the child's growth and wellbeing! (June, 2012)

According to the people that I interviewed from Mabuti CDSS, the word orphan (*mulanda* in Tumbuka language spoken in the northern region of Malawi) means "someone who has been deprived of something precious, someone who has both of his parents taken away hence he /she is alone and miserable." Others explained that the word *mulanda* has a similar Chichewa meaning originating from *alandidwa* (a person who has had something snatched away or stolen). Similar to the people from Londola, the people from Mabuti stated that someone who has lost a mother is worse off than a child who has lost his /her father. This is because they said a mother is usually the person that takes care of children and that looks after their needs, while fathers were less concerned with finding out what children actually needed. Others contended that children with divorced parents (in cases where the divorced woman got married to another man or the divorced man married another woman) and children who lived with grandparents or other relations could also be called orphans. Such children are faced with challenges including identity, belonging, and land as stated earlier on. The respondents argued that these children most times were not provided with help and lived

a very lonely and miserable life just like those children who lost their parents to death and that in most cases were similarly cared for by their grandparents.

While there was general agreement that an orphan is a child that has lost either a father or mother or both the father and mother, in practice who does a child have to lose in order to be thought of as a social and familial orphan by relatives and those living in the area? Quite paradoxically, most respondents, ranging from students, teachers, chiefs and parents from both research sites explained that the one who lost a mother is a real orphan and fathers are only important in the life of a child when it comes to provision of material things, i.e. labor, finances, and land in areas where patrilineal system is practiced.

These different definitions pointed to people's clear differentiations of emotional care and wellbeing, belonging to someone and somewhere, and financial care and wellbeing. Orphans were people who had lost the emotional care and wellbeing and belongingness of family, and sometimes financial care and wellbeing. This third form was painful, especially if the orphan was staying with a very poor relative, but it was the first two forms of care and belonging that were the most painful.

Throughout the research period, it became clear that most OVSs were at most times withdrawn while at school or out in social spaces. They stated that whenever someone used the word "orphan" it made them feel sorry as it brought to them memories of their lost parents. One of the students who had lost both parents remarked:

> I know the teachers at the school most often use this word orphan whenever they would like to meet all children that had lost their parents and select scholarship/bursary beneficiaries, but it makes us remember our lost parents. I

> feel bad. It makes me realize that I have no one that I can rely on and call as father or mother…(almost sobbing) … We did not choose to be this way and for someone to call us orphans it is not good. Well, this is why I am working hard in order to deal with my orphan-hood. When I am educated, I will get employed, get married, have children and settle down. I will have a home of my own and then nobody will call me an orphan. (November, 2012)

During the research I noted that not many OVSs received support from members of their villages, outside of the people with whom they lived, or sometimes a sibling or an uncle. More details will emerge in the next chapter but from research findings it can be suggested that the reason OVSs did not receive assistance from members might be due to the belief that such children do not belong to anybody and hence not everyone has responsibility for them, except for their direct biological relations who still think such children belong to them. Indeed, the world of belonging is shrinking for quite a number of migrating OVSs when it comes to supporting these students at CDSS and in their home. The OVSs themselves reported that they had a feeling that they do not have anyone whom they can call an anchor, except often for an elderly grandmother. They are feeling homeless due to the loss of their parents, but they are also feeling family-less because of the negative responses that they often receive from what would traditionally have been considered their closest family members. For example, just a generation ago, uncles from one or the other side (depending on whether matrilineal or patrilineal) were considered to also be children's own parents. Now these same relatives will often not provide any support to their nieces and nephews. These children feel that they also lack

emotional support from relatives, peers, and teachers, and this is very difficult to overcome.

This lack of belonging leads to the students who are successful in school focusing on how they will build their own places away from everyone else (that is, away from the village) and create their own families and sense of belonging despite what they are currently denied. This worked positively for the education of some of the OVSs when it was coupled with positive counseling by their grandmothers and role models on education. The desire to get out of the quagmire of their current precarious situations and the hope that there is light at the end of the tunnel through education is a driving force for many of them. This notion of escaping their current marginalization, or even abjection is entrenched in them by the counselling they get (Bromley, 1990) and becomes a deeply individualized concept, and it is one that commonly depends on the slim hope that the CDSS will lead someone out of the village and into urban employment and success.

International and local non-governmental organizations: New boundaries and organizational logics

The goal of supporting the education of orphaned students has long been the focus of government, NGOs, and many members of society, but what people think it means to be an orphan, the ways that "deserving" orphans are conceptualized, the way support is being provided to individual orphans, and the consequences of this support has been under-researched. In my research, I was able to observe firsthand OVSs who were receiving no support from external organizations, who were receiving individualized scholarships, and who were living in families that received conditional

cash transfers. Scholarships and cash transfers are the two key IDO approaches to supporting OVSs at this time in Malawi, and a wide range of organizations are now involved in the provision of both (Sineta, 2012; DfID, 2011).

As with Sineta (2012), I argue that the distribution of scholarships and cash transfers does have an effect on alleviating some financial problems of the OV students, but I find that it also increases inequality amongst OVSs, as many of the schemes fail to target those that are in real need and do not define ahead the vital element of counseling. Moreover, the social understandings of orphans and the community's support for their education, was impacted by these schemes. For example, the new forms of channeling bursary support to the orphaned students at the CDSSs have created a new vocabulary used to identify types of students. Some of the most common identity words used (largely by teachers and administrators, but sometimes by fellow students) are "ana obvutikitsitsa" (vulnerable children), which is used in contrast to "ana asukulu" (school students), which is what the rest of the students are called. At certain times the students that are being supported are known by the organization that supports them i.e. "ana a bursary" (bursary children), "ana a Dzuwa" (Dzuwa Trust children), "ana a ZAKA (ZAKA children), etc.

These names are perhaps unsurprising, given the visible distinguishing of these students by these organizations and by school and community actors. During the research, I observed that whenever an organization that was supporting particular students arrived at the school, they would report at the head teacher's office and request him/her to arrange for a meeting with the students that they were supporting. The head teacher would then go into each class to announce to the students that people from

ZAKA organization have come and would like to meet all the students that the organization is supporting. Usually they met the students at the end of the day's classes. I noted that such students met in either a classroom or at the open grounds outside the classrooms while some of their fellow students from the same villages watched and waited for them. There was always curiosity on the faces of these students who were waiting for their friends as they listened to and watched what the OVSs were being told or given by the organization that was supporting them. While at such meetings, talks or provision of help like shoes, school uniform, school bags, learning materials, bicycles etc. was very commendable, there was the other flip side of the coin as narrated by one CCAP Reverend during the interview:

> While we are very appreciative of the support that organizations render to these OVSs, I feel the way such support is being provided does have a negative impact on the students. I sit here on the verandah of my house and watch what is happening there at school. The organization will assemble the students it is supporting there at the ground. They then give them things like shoes, school notebooks and school bags…That is very good but you see they are shy, especially girls, when they receive such items as they realize their friends are watching them. This other day I saw on organization even giving out girls pants [underwear] in front of boys…(laughing)…oooh no! You know it is not our culture to reveal what someone is wearing inside their clothes. Just imagine, everybody knowing what the girl is wearing!! Secondly, when you do that you are isolating these students from the others and no wonder I have seen these students being helped by a particular organization always walking together. They

end up feeling more marginalized instead of happily mingling with their friends. How do you think they will forget their orphan-hood like that? (February, 2013)

The process through which support is provided at times creates a boundary between the OVSs and other students. In practice disbursement process includes public provision of quite visible material support (that is, the provision of materials that are not readily available to all, including non-orphaned children, in the community) only to individual OVSs thereby creating a boundary. This boundary is both imagined, as these students come to be understood as "belonging" to the organizations, and practical and practicable, such as when students from a particular organization are called together and given certain material goods that other students do not have. This is, in some ways, similar to the way that school blocks, furniture, and books are labeled by their host organization and come to be known as "the Masomphenya block" and so forth, set apart as they are by the material markings of the organization that are usually common across the country. Thus, for example, all "Dzuwa Trust Fund" students might have the same labeled schoolbags or the same imported shoes, which set them apart from others.

An important question for further investigation is whether the peers that the OVSs find themselves attached to (that is, those who are in a similar situation, due to the grouping created by the NGOs through their support), motivate them to further advance their education. I did not look into this area critically and more research might have to be done on this. However, most students felt that the financial and counseling support provided was very vital for their education even though some fellow students at times ridiculed them whenever they were utilizing what was given by the organization. One

Form 3 girl student named Mariana, who opted out of receiving support from an organization named LOTA, said:

> I once received a pair of school shoes and a school bag from LOTA. They were very good materials but each time I wore those shoes or carried that school bag my friends and some boys used to mock me saying 'what would you have been if it were not for LOTA?' I then decided not to wear them and started carrying my notebooks in a plastic paper bag just as most of them do. Later on, I told the LOTA people that I have quit the group. (September, 2012)

Mariana's experience reflects in part the apparent desire on the part of many organizations to "brand" the children whom they support, either with materials that have the name of the organization or through the provision of goods that are not locally available and therefore are very visible to other community members. I had a number of interviews with other students who were receiving support from various organizations. Most of them were very happy with the support but expressed similar sentiments when it came to materials being provided and the process of providing the resources to them that is utilized by the organizations, particularly the visibility that they had to experience. I noted that the elderly girls (18-24 years old) found this process more demeaning than the younger girls aged between 13 and 16 years old. Actually, the one who opted out of the support by the organization was 21 years old and decided to do piece work in other peoples' gardens instead of continuing to receive such visible external support.

The interviews with the organizations revealed that the organizations are caught between two worlds – the demands by funders for "transparency and accountability" under so-called good governance policies, and the right to privacy of the OVSs. Despite

the reality of this struggle, it was also evident that many of the organizations' staff members are not particularly concerned about recognizing and attempting to limit invasions of the students' privacy. The students that felt the experience they went through when receiving the items was demeaning stated that they were working hard in school so that they can come out of this situation of receiving free things from organizations and being ridiculed by other people. They thought it was better to be independent and in order to obtain that independence someone had to be educated, get some employment and then earn a salary. Kendall and Silver (2014) found a very similar pattern in the SUPER research she conducted in Malawi to find out from primary school children their goals for getting educated. The students stated that they wanted to be educated so that they gain economic independence through salaried work, and also have the capacity to help others rather to be economically dependent on somebody.

This strong belief in the benefits of independence might have been inculcated in OVSs by the counseling they got from their guardians, other relatives and some other organizations. For example, in the many interviews I conducted with guardians, school management committees members, and CBO committee members, these actors revealed that one of the critical messages they used to give to the OVSs whenever they were giving them material help like fees, soap, and clothes, was that the OVSs should work hard in class so that they can be employed and be independent in the future.

One challenge I noted throughout the research is the general type of counseling and modeling that is currently available in places like Mabuti and Londola. The point stressed often in this counseling is for the OVS to get educated and be employed as a nurse, a bank teller, a teacher, or some other formal job. Education is always pictured as

a gateway to some formal type of work. Such positioning of education has positively helped to build motivation, resilience and persistence in OVSs. However, the question that might be posed is what will this counseling result in after OVSs complete their secondary education, if they are not able to achieve formal work? Such opportunities are decreasing, not increasing, in Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda and the students' hopes and expectations, if not fulfilled through schooling, can become problematic (Vavrus, 2003; DeJaeghere, 2014), just as community responses to their lack of finding jobs can also further marginalize them (Bajaj, 2010).

While isolation and teasing of the OVSs frequently occurred at school in response to the support and grouping by the organizations, the situation was worse at home for those students that received support from organizations when there were many other children kept by the same guardians who did not receive these goods. Foster, Makufa, Drew, Kambeu & Saurombe (1996) and Heymann & Kidman (2009) also point out the many challenges that orphans meet when support is targeted to them individually. For instance, Kamkonda, who was staying with her aunt, was given a blanket, shoes, school uniform, a school bag, and notebooks by an organization. The aunt had her own four children apart from the two orphans she was keeping, including Kamkonda. During the research one morning I observed that the four biological children of this aunt wore no shoes, and carried their notebooks in plastic bags. They looked at Kamkonda with envy and at one time one of the children said as they were starting off to school:

You go ahead. We do not want to walk with you because you walk faster since you have shoes! Some of us the back part of our feet pain when we step on stones when we are trying to run or walk faster.

Kamkonda did not respond to such talk but just went ahead. I could see she was full of thoughts. When I later asked her, she told me that she has to be resilient to such statements as they are very commonly spoken by her relations since she received the support from the organizations. She informed me that her wish was to get educated, get out of the home, and find employment where she would be independent. She expressed the feeling that her relatives would keep her, but did not view her as belonging to their family fully.

This is an example where the support Kamkonda had received had created a boundary between her and her relations.

As an extensive literature cited above has already proven, development programs aimed at supporting OVSs would have fewer negative consequences if they targeted the OVSs and the families that kept them, or whole villages, after carrying out proper analysis of the home or village situation. A home/village analysis is important because different OVSs experience quite different forms of support, senses of belonging, and ability to manage external material support within the social dynamics of their living situations. For example, from the time I lived in the village, I noted that OVSs that lived with grandparents were having fewer challenges of isolation than those living with their aunts, uncles, and other relatives. It might be due to the fact that the grandparents kept orphans who came from different families of their late sons and daughters and nobody could claim ownership of the home. All the OVSs knew that they will all go away at

some point, after their grandparents passed away, and so they all worked hard at school to make their future home. At the same time, the material poverty of grandparent-headed homes was generally higher, so there was less capacity for OVSs in these homes to survive and continue in school if they did not take part in bursary programs or if these programs did not meet their immediate needs (for example, some programs did not release funds on time, leaving these students stranded and usually kicked out of school for a term or a year).

Another boundary is unknowingly set up through the initial identification of the OVSs that are to get bursaries or any other education support. This identification process increased inequality amongst the OVSs because the organizations often failed to target those that were in the direst need and most often did not include the vital element of counseling. Identification of OVSs to receive bursaries is most commonly done at school by the head teacher and other teachers. They usually selected students for bursaries who, from their perspective, struggled to pay school fees as narrated by head teacher from Londola:

> When an organization asks us to provide names of students that they can support, I contact my fellow class teachers. They check in their register to see which student is a frequent absentee. They interview such a student to find out the reasons and they determine whether he/she needs support or not. Usually a students that is an absentee for a week or more is an indication that he/she is struggling to get fees and maybe he/she was had been away doing piece work to find some school fees (July, 2012)

While this process serves the need of identifying one group of OVSs that are in need, but it also has challenges. It is not inclusive as it does not take into account those OVSs that do not even report to school due to lack of fees. This group was generally the most economically marginalized in the community. There were some OVSs that were selected to go to the CDSS but because they were not aware that there might be some bursary opportunities at school, they did not even go to enroll. The situation is exacerbated by the lack of participation of chiefs and other stakeholders, such as PTA and SMC members, in the identification of scholarship or bursary recipients.

Although the process narrated by the head teacher above did occur in some schools, it was also common for the head teachers and teachers to come to class and single out OVSs for the exercise, which automatically set discriminatory boundaries between the OVSs and other students. For instance, when I went to observe a class in session, a head teacher at Londola CDSS came into class to announce a possible scholarship from which the OVSs could benefit:

> Good morning class. I have good news for you. Can all those that have lost either their mothers or fathers or lost both the mother and father stand up please (I saw some students standing up quickly, while others were standing up very slowly) [He counts them]. Can you all come to my office after school so that I can register your names? There is an organization that would like to pay school fees for you.

The challenge with this method of identifying OVSs is that most students felt very uncomfortable. They were publicly separated from the other students by their misfortune - -that of losing their parents. When I enquired as to how this discrimination

could be dealt with, some parents, SMC and PTA members, and chiefs suggested that the identification of the OVSs to be supported by organization scholarships or government bursaries should be done through Focus Group Discussions (FDGs) in the villages where these students were coming from. They indicated that the FDGs were to involve chiefs, parents, students themselves, and SMC/PTA members. They argued that it is these people that know the "real" OVSs that need support. In this dissertation, "Real OVSs" are defined by research participants as those orphans who have lost either one parent or both parents and have no one else to rely upon for their basic needs. Some OVS who receive support from relations who are working elsewhere are not considered "real" orphans through this definition, because they do have someone providing key material support. This definition points to the intersectional approach to defining "true" orphan-hood used by most communities in Malawi (see also Kendall 2008), who do not rely solely on a Western definition of a nuclear family when thinking about responsibility toward children and the people who are expected to play parental roles toward each child. They further narrated that if identification is done using the above-mentioned process, the designated support can be provided to the OVSs in their respective homes without many people knowing, thereby reducing antagonism that the OVSs suffer from friends when the support is done in public. It must be noted again, however, that most of these problems could be avoided if a critical analysis of where the OVS is staying is done before disbursing the items.

The question that lies behind these issues of how OVSs are selected to receive support and what kind of support they receive is the broader issue of how OVSs can be supported in the short term in order for them to take care of their own needs in the long

term. How best do NGO support programs deal with this need for current relations of dependence in order to stabilize OVSs survival and belonging (more will be described in Chapter 5), but future needs and desires for what OVSs describe as independence? Is this in any way possible when programming only provides individual OVSs with support amongst the large number of children that are kept by the guardian? Providing help to only OVSs in the family transforms the OVSs' position in the family and potentially reduces the OVSs' stature as a "full" member of the family. This dynamic was evident in Kamkonda's cousins' response to her new shoes and other materials, which they did not have. Such shifts in dynamics related to belonging and to voice in the family might lead to mistreatment, not being counted as part of the family, and eventually not being encouraged to continue with their education. One of the OVSs from Mabuti CDSS had this to say:

> When my father and mother passed away when I was barely ten, they left a garden. It is now being cultivated by my uncle, the brother to my late father. I am told that he is keeping the land for me, and will give me whenever I have completed my studies. You see right now I am staying with my grandparents. I help them by cultivating their piece of land and we grow crops that we eat. I cannot grow crops on my own land because it will mean that I would like to live on my own…(laughs)…and cook on my own…(silent and looks up into the sky)…some people would interpret it that I would like to stop school and get married…(almost in a whisper)…Right now, I am focusing on education and am happy living with my grandparents (November, 2012)

Land is quite scarce. This is due to increase in population but at the same time traditional systems of passing down land within families are not providing enough land for survival anymore. For example, in Londola area, the average family landholding is less than one acre. OVSs that get counseling on the importance of education look forward to getting married to a fellow educated boy or girl and envision having resources that will enable them to buy their own land, perhaps in their home village, but perhaps somewhere else. Indeed, to some OVSs, the lack of land is a motivation to get educated so that she / he can have his or her own land later on, as can be seen in an interview below I had with a female OVS:

> When I sit and pass my Form 4 examinations, I would like to go to Nursing College, like University of Malawi - Kamuzu College of Nursing. After completing the nursing course I will get employed. After working for three years I will then get married. I will encourage my husband that we should look for a piece of land which we can buy where we can settle. (November, 2012)

What is transpiring here is that perhaps OVSs think about land in a manner that used to be quite rare, but is becoming more common as scarcity increases, as land is bought up to farm tobacco, and as family breakdowns lead to more people being denied access to land. Since the OVSs don't belong anywhere right now, they have to buy their own belonging. On the one hand, this is a radical change from just a few short decades ago, when people could always say that they belonged to a particular village or clan. But on the other hand, now that land can be bought and sold, so too, perhaps, can belonging. The land may be for farming, but it may be for them to have "a place" somewhere, like others who live in the city and survive from salaries, but still have land somewhere "at

home". This seems different than the way people often think about land being empowering, which is about access to the means of production itself.

OVSs and empowerment

There is increasing attention to the empowerment of OVSs through schooling and in their communities (in order to further support their schooling). There are many different definitions of empowerment evident in these literatures, but here I want to focus on the idea that the provision of certain things, including land and schooling, are expected not only to "empower" OVSs presently, but also in the future. That is, the provision of certain things is expected to mean that OVSs' futures are secured. This focus on provision of things is visible in how NGOs provide OVSs with shoes, notebooks, bags, and other goods, and it is also visible in the focus on assuring that OVSs have access to land and to schooling. Just as with the material goods the NGOs provide OVSs, however, many of the other things that are expected to empower OVSs may in some ways be double-edged swords. Here, I am examining only two that are most often discussed by the GoM, IDOs, and community members: land and schooling.

OVSs' access to land is shaped by age and gender, as well as by local land ownership systems. In much of the literature on land and OVCs, there is an assumption that OVCs are empowered by simply having access to land. For example, there is a large literature on the problem of land-grabbing and its consequences for OVCs (e.g., McPherson, 2006; Weislander, 2010; Himonga, 2011; Mabikke, 2011). However, my research reveals that it is hard for the OVSs to be quickly empowered through land acquisition. In both research sites, patrilineal and matrilineal, the OVSs cannot receive

this land from their relations, for it means them dropping out of school. For a girl or a boy, she /he has to get married or get pregnant (in case of a girl) so that he/she gets the land. Alternatively, some OVSs might be able to claim land that relatives are currently holding for them. If they do so, however, there is an assumption that they are then independent and they will not receive care and support from existing guardians. Because subsistence farming is a full-time job, many OVSs said that they would prefer to share the labor and the rewards of farming with their guardians. Some were also concerned that if they left to farm on their own, they would also be lonely and lack their guardians' counseling.

Just as some people say that access to land is automatically "empowering", Stromquist (2002) also notes that "a lot of literature claims that attending classes is empowering" (p. 23). Indeed, the capacity of school attendance to transform OVSs daily lives and their sense of future possibilities can be noted throughout their interviews. At the same time, just as owning land can be both empowering and disempowering in different ways, there are also other hidden factors to school-going that affect its capacity to automatically or consistently "empower" OVSs. While agreeing with many scholars that schooling might foster an inner transformation – for example, the life skills subject in the Malawi curriculum focuses on developing self-esteem, self -worth, self-determination, self-reliance, and self-confidence, which are highlighted by other scholars as central components of such a transformation (Stromquist, 2002; Rowlands, 1995)—I argue that schooling on its own without an aspect of counseling (that is, community members directly engaging with OVSs to encourage and support them in their efforts; teachers counseled on the roles they could play towards OVSs students), and without an

acknowledgement of the roles that school environments can play in fostering both safety and danger for students, other environmental factors that lead to lack of belonging or identity may lead to CDSSs having limited positive transformational power in the lives of the OVSs. For instance, the teachers calling out the OVSs as "orphans" during the school assembly, shouting at them without finding out why they were acting in certain ways, and rushing to giving out punishing to them when they are late to school or were absent from school without enquiring what caused them to be late or absent. Education can indeed act as a catalyst to OVSs' empowerment, but it is not the only thing that does so, and it cannot act on its own – other factors play a major role. One other such factor is the gendered community support that is rendered to the OVSs.

Another example of the gendered community support that is rendered to OVSs is the gendered behavioral and cultural roles that are assigned to the male and female OVSs. For example, the idea that certain tasks are for girls and certain ones are for boys, i.e. cooking nsima, hauling water, fetching firewood, and gathering and cooking relish is for girls, has some implications on the educational life of the OVSs. The boy OVS is expected to be working in the gardens doing some piece work and in the process getting some funds. This enables the boys to raise some resources to pay for their school fees and purchase some food items during school break times. The female OVSs cannot do this due to the gendered roles that they are assigned in the home, which leave them with no time for doing paying work. They are then in a worse economic situation whenever school fees are not paid for them. In order for them to get any resources, they have to engage themselves in gendered jobs that could be conducted in or around the home or something that the community regards as normal for a girl to do. Such piece work

includes hauling water for somebody, fetching firewood and doing other household chores. Usually such type of work pays less than farming someone's piece of land. Besides, the female OVSs usually did not have time to do such pieces of work since as soon as they came from school, they were usually requested to look for relish and water and cook food for the family to eat while the boy would be reading, doing homework or doing some piece work for money. Some female OVSs explained that those students with a "limited vision" of their future ended up indulging themselves in love relationships in order to get some funds from the boys or older men that they used to get some food during school breaks or to buy some basic necessities.

Moreover, these gendered responsibilities are more likely to lead female OVSs to not attend school in the first place. Whenever a child in the household is ill, the female OVS usually did not go to school in order to take care of the household chores while the mother of the sick child went with the child to the hospital. This assignment of gendered roles, even though it puts the female OVSs at a disadvantage, seems not to be worrying the guardians as one spoke to the female research assistant:

> Nya Mhone, it is our culture that a real girl needs to know how to take care of the home and how to cook. She has to grow up to be a woman who will one day take care of her family, so she has to learn all that. Men are to learn how to bring food in the home. You see, they have to learn how to bring money into the home to feed the family. (November, 2012)

This belief has significantly played into gendered roles that are assigned to the male and female OVSs and probably sheds more light on why the female OVSs were not provided land to grow crops if they were not married. They, together with their

guardians, cultivated the land that belonged to their mothers/fathers or sisters until they got married or became pregnant without getting married. The female students had to ask their mothers or sisters if they could sell any part of the commodities they had grown in order to buy school necessities. However, the male students were given a piece of land to grow some crops. They had control over the crops, so they could sell them and easily purchase some school materials. This was the case both in Mabuti and Londola CDSS areas.

Because of these differences in gendered opportunities and responsibilities, the support provided by some NGOs working in the areas seem to make a more significant difference in the lives of female OVSs as compared to male OVSs. Some of the NGOs working in the areas provide school fees and uniforms to both male and female OVSs. This support tries to alleviate the hardship that OVSs face, but de facto it alleviates the issues that are particularly harshly faced by the female OVSs, who are almost entirely dependent on others to provide them these resources and cannot easily generate them alone.

In contrast to the NGO interventions, which appeared to favor girls in terms of whom they supported most, I argue that there is negligible (almost none) community support being provided to OVSs *perse* except for that provided by some of the kindred. The support that communities provide to the schools is for all the students i.e. moulding bricks and building school blocks. The general support to all students does not provide equal opportunities for the girls and boys to excel in their academic activities. Community members, however, for the most part expressed the opinion that it was reasonable and in fact necessary to maintain gendered expectations for uneven labor

distribution, and for uneven access to resources. In some cases, the hardships that the girls faced, with proper counseling from the guardians, became a motivational factor for them to continue in school, as narrated by Johayana:

> I wake up very early in the morning, go to the garden to cultivate for one hour and then come back to boil water and cook porridge for the siblings and my brother. I walk five kilometers to the CDSS. When I come back I have to fetch relish and cook food for the family. They tell me "you have to know household work so that you become a good wife!" Oh! It is so tiresome but you see, the only way for me to get out of this torture is through education. I am working hard because I do not want my life to be full of such hard work! (December, 2012)

What Johayana narrated triggered me to find out from the quantitative data I had collected from the 62 randomly sampled OVSs how they were fairing in class. The table below depicts how the sampled male and female OVSs performed in class. I looked at the grades and the position in class each student got. Their ranges varied between boys and girls.

Table 4: Comparison of male and female OVS sampled students' achievement in class

School	Student gender and (total number)	Range of position in class			
		Form 1 (range of position of the 4 male / 4 female sampled in each class)	Form 2 (range of position of the 4 male / 4 female sampled in each class)	Form 3 (range of position of the 4 male / 4 female sampled in each class)	Form 4 (range of position of the 4 male / 4 female sampled in each class)
Londola	Male	8 -16	3 -9	1-3	3-9
	Female	4 - 12	2 – 4	6 - 12	2 - 6
Mabuti	Male	4 – 7	2 - 4	5 - 7	6 – 10
	Female	1 – 4	3 - 9	6 - 14	4 - 10

From the table above it can be noted that in both sites, amongst the sampled OVSs girls were doing better than boys except in Form 3. What Johayana stated could be one of the contributing factors to the success of the female OVSs, namely, that female OVSs, if they are able to attend school regularly, feel the greatest urgency to use school as an escape from their current lives. Male OVSs see some alternatives for a better life if they do not succeed at school. For female OVSs, a life without school success is full of very hard work and few opportunities for a better life.

While the female OVSs in this research can be viewed as better achievers in school, they do not represent the norm of female students in most CDSS, who on average perform below their male colleagues. The female students from the sample can thus easily be construed as OVSs who are highly motivated, strong willed, and resilient

even though they face a myriad challenges from their homes and school throughout their academic journey. It should be noted that the same argument can be generally made for the male OVSs who stay in secondary school. This is not an easy path for any student, and for those who do not do well academically, it is a path that likely very quickly becomes unnavigable. Here we again see the sampling issues that arise from focusing only on OVSs that have made it back to the school door again and again, as opposed to those who never arrive, or depart rapidly. This study can provide insights into what is required for an OVS to make it to this point, but there is no doubt that the majority of OVSs are not visible in the CDSSs.

The complexities of being a female OVS can thus be viewed as quite different from male OVSs. As much as female OVSs were students, they were expected to get married, do household chores, and be caregivers to grannies and siblings whenever these fell ill. The female OVSs themselves saw their roles as such and did not abandon what their society expected of them. Hence, they frequently said something to the effect of "I want to be educated, get employed and after which get married, have my own children and settle down. Then, I can care for my elders very well."

There is a need, therefore, to look critically at the support that can be rendered to each OVS while taking into account the gendered constructs within each society. The streamlining of what support is provided to female OVSs will go a long way into improving their education rather than the current situation where there is a generalized type of support being provided to all OVSs regardless of sex. For example, especially as firewood and relish become scarce and often have to be bought if the OVS is to avoid foraging for many hours, providing OVS households with new cook-stove technologies

and small money to purchase relish could make a significant difference in the time they have to study and focus on school.

In the following section I examine the communities in which OVSs are living and argue that community is made up of different structures and the center of these structures cannot hold any longer – things have fallen apart. My main focus will be on leadership, and material changes that have occurred over the past decades which render current approaches to community-based support untenable.

Local leadership: Shrinking power and authority

A lot has happened since the introduction of multiparty democracy in 1994 in Malawi. Because of the way that the concept was introduced, people came to understand democracy as providing new rights, without concomitant responsibilities (Kendall, 2008) – everybody has a right to do what they wish and they cannot be questioned or confronted by someone other than government officials. In 1999, President Muluzi declared that chiefs would no longer be responsible for serving as judge and police in villages; these roles could only be played by government courts and police. This marked a radical transformation in local governance practices. From a number of formal and informal interviews I conducted with the chiefs, I established that there is a general feeling of despondency amongst the chiefs due to their loss of power and authority since democracy era. One chief stated:

> We can no longer call for a meeting to discuss development issues let alone issues concerning the OVSs and expect members from the village to attend unless it is a meeting that has to do with fertilizer subsidy or if it is chaired by an

external body/ institution (teachers /or NGOs, / Government officials). People will not attend because they know we cannot do anything if they do not attend. They no longer respect us. (April, 2013)

Indeed, throughout the research, no local leader called for a meeting to discuss the plight of OVSs, including the support needed by them, issues of land, their living conditions, or so forth. In many areas there are no more local (traditional) courts to deal with the cases that were previously dealt with by the chiefs. This completely disempowers the chiefs and has had a negative effect for many marginalized citizens. The people have to go to the magistrate or high courts, which are at a distant place from rural areas, making it difficult for the rural poor to reach and receive justice.

This has fundamentally affected the lives and support that is being rendered to the OVSs living in Londola and Mabuti areas as the poor community members that are engaged in activities aimed at supporting the OVSs fail to get justice when it is needed. For instance, in both areas there are CBOs that were established in order to support orphaned and marginalized children, including their education. In Londola area, the CBO started rearing 300 broiler chickens with an aim of supporting OVCs' learning in primary and secondary schools after selling the chickens. The members of the CBO reared the chickens and when it was time to sell them, they distributed these chickens to the people in the villages on loan, which was to be paid within two months. Unfortunately, by the time I was conducting my research, which was two years since the chickens were sold through credit, only 10 out of 200 people had paid off the debt. When the research assistant had asked the treasurer of the CBO the reason behind this low debt recovery, she reported:

> The people who got the chickens on credit do not care about paying for the chickens. We have visited them a number of times and whenever we ask them they say: "why should you bother? This money is for the orphans – does not have any owner, let us also have an opportunity to embezzle the funds! The officials from the government are getting a lot of allowances when they come to visit you, it is time for us also to benefit from the cake!" You see we have approached the chief several times to help us by summoning the people so that we can recover the funds but they tell us that they cannot do anything since the local courts are no longer in operations. They have asked us to take the matter to the law enforcers – the police. The police station is 28 kilometers from here and you see, cases in the magistrate or high court are so rigorous and take a very long time to get concluded. Meanwhile, somebody has to make so many trips to the court. It is expensive and we would be spending so much money and time on such court cases. We then just decided to stop rearing the chicken and had thus only managed to pay secondary school fees for three children. (Personal Interview with Mrs. Hide Bompho 08/28/2012)

This case is similar to one that I found in the Mabuti area. There is a CBO that was given a maize mill to run so that the proceeds from it could help in supporting the OVCs, including paying school fees for some secondary school students. They did this for a short time because some members embezzled the funds and the Electricity Supply Commission of Malawi (ESCOM) disconnected the electricity for non-payment of bills. I was informed that the chiefs failed to apprehend the culprits because they felt they did

not have the power to do that and referred the group to police as stated by the Group Village Headman Mwendachenya:

> These days there is too much democracy and freedom. Whenever you try to advise or correct someone for the wrong doing, you will be told: "you are infringing on my rights, after all who are you to judge me!" My son, this country is no more the same. We used to settle cases here at home but not now. If it were in the past those that swindled funds from the maize mill would have already paid back the money! Aaaah, if they failed we would get anything from their homes and sell it just to recover the funds. Chiefs used to have power but not nowadays! (December, 2012)

The issue has been pending since then. In the meantime, no OVS was being supported. In both the above scenarios, the chiefs complained about their lack of authority due to democracy. In the process of "improving" governance, transparency and accountability, the government has disempowered the chiefs who previously were pillars of justice in the village. The chief's lack of power/authority is affecting the support the OVSs should have been receiving from the work of community members. Democracy has thus contributed towards the shrinkage of the chief's power and in the process the shrinkage of the community's support to OVSs and the reduction in size of the community members that would support the OVSs.

The situation of the chiefs having no authority in both Londola and Mabuti has been exacerbated by the national fertilizer subsidy program, which is supposed to serve the elderly and needy people in the village, but has become an extremely divisive issue for leaders and community members throughout the country. The power and authority of

the chief has in many cases been limited and concentrated only to the group of people that receive fertilizer subsidy. The people felt that only those individuals provided with fertilizer should be attending the chief's meetings, for it is only them that had benefited from the chief. This is very similar to the narrowing of the definition of community around CDSS, which were viewed as only serving current students and their direct families. As in the Londola case, when selection of these students was viewed as unfair, this narrowing occurred even more strongly, with particularly dire implications for OVCs. During the research I noted that the chiefs did not have a deliberate policy to target the OVSs or their guardians for fertilizer subsidies; instead, these were targeted at relatives and cronies. This seems to have left the OVSs with a feeling that they are not helped much by the chiefs and other people from within their villages. The OVSs imagine they are on a lonely island but need to find ways of swimming back to the shores of the mainland where people live in comfort. The primary way is thought to be education, as remarked by Ganizani Chikopa, one of the OVSs in Londola:

> The chiefs in our area have not been helpful. They have not called for meetings to discuss about our plight. We hear of other people receiving fertilizer subsidy but none of us (he means the OVSs) have received anything. Well, we cannot rely upon them. These days everyone has to fend for him or herself! I am working hard in class because I know that there is no one else that will shape my future. (March, 2013)

Community participation hinges on the existence of strong leadership (Pryor, 2005), and the lack of such leadership leads to minimal, undesirable, or no participation of various members of the community. The shrinking of power and authority of leaders

in the rural area can thus negatively affect the support that the OVSs can receive through mechanisms of community participation. But the shrinking of leaders' powers can also affect leaders' own willingness to adopt practices that do not favor the most marginalized in their own community. When organizations or government institutions turn to community participation as the main means of providing support to OVSs, issues of power shrinkage and authority of the leaders in the community needs to be taken into account. The fertilizer subsidy program shows clearly that giving weak leaders responsibility for caring for the most marginalized in their community while at the same time removing their capacity to enforce laws is a combination that does not often favor OVSs.

Material changes

While material changes, with time, are inevitable in any society, in Londola and Mabuti it was clear that environmental changes in rural areas are leading to economic challenges that play a significant role when it comes to community participation towards OVSs' education. For communities to participate in any social or development work, they utilize the resources that they have at their disposal (Pryor, 2005). I observed the wanton cutting down of trees and deforestation that has happened in rural areas. This makes it hard for women to get firewood for cooking, and they and school-aged girls have to travel very long distances to collect firewood from some forests.

The scarcity of firewood and the long distance to possible sites where it can be collected has led to firewood becoming a precious and expensive commodity. The situation is worse for grandmothers, who can hardly walk such long distances. They

have to either buy the firewood or send the girls to gather the firewood from the forests. Those women who can manage to go and gather firewood from the forest at times sell some for cash, which they use in purchasing some household items. This situation impacts on the time and funds available to the women that they could utilize in supporting the OVSs as narrated by one OVS's guardian from Mabuti:

> Mr. Kaunda, things have changed these days. We used to collect firewood just from a stone's throw distance. These days we have to start off around 3:00 am to the forest which is very far away and usually arrive home tired at around 2:30 pm. But unfortunately we cannot do without firewood since it is the only means we have for cooking food. If you are not able to collect the firewood then you have to buy. We never used to buy firewood in the past! The world is really changing…(she laughs with indignation).

The increasing scarcity of firewood was also common subject of talk amongst women in the Londola area. The scarcity of such resources has compounded the problem of caring for OVSs by the grandparents. The grandparents can hardly walk long distances, hence they have to rely upon the female OVSs or if they have cash, they have to buy firewood. More generally, this issue with firewood is indicative that there are more things that demand cash nowadays than in the past. It means the rural people's wealth is shrinking and hence they have limitations in their capability to share with OVSs.

In Londola, in order to increase their wealth, some grandparents and guardians have resorted to beer brewing after failing to grow tomatoes due to high costs of pesticides. This beer was being sold by the female OVSs, thereby putting such students

in a risky environment. Some men who came to buy and drink beer proposition such girls, leading to early marriages or pregnancies. The environmental changes in rural areas lead to economic challenges that place heavy burdens upon the community members, including the OVSs' guardians. These need to be considered when hatching up programs that put community participation at the center for supporting OVSs.

Conclusion

The development literature generally supports the view that community participation empowers OVSs and improves the welfare/care of OVSs. These literatures generally fail to pinpoint how exactly this comes about, however, and therefore fail to explain how the cohesion of community structures has been affected by the changing perceptions and interpretations the various stakeholders have on community and on participation. This is exacerbated by the changing social, cultural and economic factors. Poor economic conditions and HIV/AIDS have led to shrinkage of the community members available to support the OVSs, and shrinkage in the roles that chiefs can play in addressing or moderating injustices.

As many scholars, government officials, and NGOs push for community participation, they may be missing strategic points where community participation can be successfully nurtured to encourage systemic changes and frameworks that can support the OVSs social and economic networks, thereby be able to succeed in their secondary education. I am therefore arguing that it is not only important to talk about community participation in supporting OVSs, but it is also important to understand the environments and experiences such students go through as they receive support from

various stakeholders. This chapter has also shown that while community participation is being advocated, it is important to realize that community is 'shrinking" as the community leadership's power and authority is also shrinking. Many scholars (Peters, 2002; Anderson, 1998) have advocated for the utilization of existing structures during involvement of communities for sustainability, but they have not been able to show that community participation is not only about existing structures but also about the authority, material base, and governance techniques and methods with which such structures are endowed.

I have shown that successfully educating OVSs hinges on providing female and male OVSs with both social and material support. This support sometimes came in part from external actors, but always also involved successful utilization of internal resources. It should be underlined that the education of the OVSs is influenced by a complex set of structural, behavioral and economic factors. The OVSs and their guardians need to be placed at the center of education policy, programming, and strategic interventions that affect OVSs' education.

Furthermore, the findings have shown that community resources have tightened in various ways, and in turn this means that it is harder and harder for the community to actively participate in reaching out and supporting additional people/students. In situations like this, where poverty and scarce resources are everyone's experience (not just OVSs), solutions must reasonably address the material conditions affecting OVSs, guardians, and their communities. This will require providing materials to these different bodies, as well as working with communities to strengthen leadership processes and

practices. As the guardians often said to me in interviews, "nothing about OVSs' secondary education without them."

In the next chapter, I will look at the daily lives and experiences of OVSs in two CDSSs, one in the district in the northern region and the other in the district in the southern region of Malawi. This will give a clearer picture on how OVSs' education is affected by the community and school environments where OVSs live and how community participation is impacted by the same.

CHAPTER FIVE: SCHOOLING ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE STUDENTS AT COMMUNITY DAY SECONDARY SCHOOL: THE DYNAMICS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Introduction

In Chapter Four, I looked the how community participation is impacted upon by the shrinkage of community members and roles of chiefs. I also showed how the changing perceptions and interpretations various members have on community and participation have been affected by the social, cultural and economic factors and unveiled some strategic points where community participation can be nurtured. This chapter presents examples from Londola and Mabuti CDSSs to illustrate how OVSs' school and life experiences are affected by the relations and environments in which their school attendance is embedded, including space, place, and socio-cultural, political, and economic relations. These factors shape how the community participates in the education of the OVSs, as effective community participation exists in the context of political, social and legal structures that shape the feasibility of participatory actions (Anderson, 1999). Understanding the dynamics of community participation and OVSs' schooling and life experiences is important because the GoM advocates that OVCs be kept within the community and not in orphanages, where schools may operate separately from direct community structures. That is, just as the daily care of OVCs is placed firmly in communities, so too the GoM argues that OVSs' schooling should be primarily community-supported, not externally-run.

In order to understand the community dynamics and community interpretations of the government mandate for community-based and community-driven secondary schooling, I will start by looking at the places where OVSs who attend CDSSs live. I

then follow this with a description of their daily lives at home and as they move through to school. Having examined the place ecologies in which OVSs live and move, I then explore the social, cultural, political, and economic ecologies and relations that shape their educational experiences and possibilities.

Places where OVSs live: Londola and Mabuti

OVSs' lives and school experiences are deeply shaped by geographical, social, and economic contexts. Here I will examine these environments through two lenses of power differentiation and material differences, as they relate to the two sites in the study.

In Londola area, most people engage in small businesses like selling small quantities of fish, bananas, cassava, fritters, sugar cane and vegetables. On average, each family has 1 acre of land and a small portion of *dimba* garden which is mostly cultivated by the boys if they are present in the household. The people from the Londola area access safe drinking water from bore holes that are spaced at a distance of about 2 kilometers from each other. When one is walking in the villages, it is very rare to see indigenous trees near the houses, except for a few exotic trees like gmelina, blue gum and acacias, which are normally planted along the footpaths or behind the house and at times along the edges of the garden. These few trees that are planted are fast-growing and are used as firewood for cooking because there is no other source of energy for the people in the village to use. At times, households which do not have well grown trees that can be used for firewood, have their women and girls travel 5 to 7 kilometers to buy firewood from others.

About 1 kilometer from the school, a transformer for electricity is hoisted on two big poles from which electricity is tapped for an electric maize mill and other small grocery shops. On average, people from Londola CDSS catchment area have to travel about three kilometers to the maize mill. People from the surrounding villages have not tapped electricity into their homes, largely because they don't have the funds to pay for electricity. These features have a great bearing on the lives of the OVSs at Londola CDSS as will be seen later in the chapter.

In Mabuti CDSS area, most people are engaged in selling food crops like maize, cassava, groundnuts, and sweet potatoes. Other people, though few, sell fish and beans. On average each family has a 3 acre piece of land and not many people have *dimba* gardens. The main source of water in the area are bore holes, which are placed at an average distance of three kilometers from each other. The boreholes are not evenly spaced, however, because of underground water patterns. There is also a river, but at times it dries out during the dry season. This river is about five kilometers away from most of the villages. There used to be community tap water running in the area, but this is no longer the case nowadays due to lack of maintenance and repairs. Electricity poles pass through the middle of the CDSS catchment area but only Mabuti primary school and the owners of four maize mills have managed to tap electricity from it. This situation means that most people depend on firewood in their homes as their source of energy for cooking.

Just like in Londola, most trees have been cut down around the villages, but in Mabuti area, trees have largely been depleted due to Tobacco that is being grown in the area: wooden poles are used for making Tobacco sheds where Tobacco is cured. There

are very few indigenous trees seen near homes, except for areas demarcated as graveyards. Unlike in Londola, most people in Mabuti do not plant exotic trees. Girls and women travel about 5 kilometers to collect firewood from the forest.

Londola CDSS caters for students that come from six primary schools surrounding the CDSS. The six primary schools have a catchment area of 55 villages with each village having on average 87 households giving a total of approximately 4,785 households. The secondary school is built on a slightly raised but fairly flat piece of ground that belongs to a church. There are two main school blocks that face each other from about 70 meters apart. The block on the northern side has two classrooms, a library that is now also serving as a head teacher's office, and a staff office that was the designated head teacher's office. The block on the southern side has two classrooms. Inside these classrooms are some wooden desks and chairs, some of which are broken and just heaped at the back of the classrooms; some plastic chairs that have no desks; and a floor with large pot holes.

Londola CDSS

Photo 1: Londola CDSS-Meeting in progress

There is an open ground between the two blocks, and there are two big trees on the edges of the open ground, one in the east (see Photo 1 above) acts as a venue for meetings with community leaders, parents, and students and most of the times during the research we participated in such meetings whenever they were being held; and the other one is in the west. Next to the tree in the west is a big mound of sand that I learnt later was hauled by the community from the catchment schools around the CDSS, at the request of the head teacher, to build another school block. The trees provide shade to the students during sunny and hot days, act as a place for the students to chat during break session, and also act as venues for meetings with community leaders, parents, and

students. Further to the southwest there is a net ball ground, and next to the ground there are some blue gum trees that belong to the school.

Near the school compound, about 70 meters from the school to the western side, are four relatively small two-bedroomed teacher's houses. One new house that is designated to be the head teacher's house is under construction near the existing teachers' houses. A big house belonging to the church, which was previously utilized by the head teacher but is now utilized by the CCAP Reverend, stands out immaculately on the eastern side of the school and is very close to one of the school blocks. The house is strategically positioned as if to show the overseeing responsibility of the Reverend over the CDSS, even though the government claims this responsibility. A bore hole that serves the secondary school, primary school, and community near the school is drilled behind the current head teacher's house.

In order to reach the CDSS, one has to pass a small trading center where there is some electricity, the big church, the Teachers' Development Center, and the primary school. There is a transformer for electricity placed at this small trading center, which is less than a kilometer away from the secondary school, and yet the school and teachers' houses do not have any electricity. Some of the teacher's houses were wired more than three years ago in anticipation for the much awaited electricity, but it has never materialized.

Mabuti CDSS

Mabuti CDSS is surrounded by three primary schools with a catchment area of 23 villages from which secondary school students are selected. Each village is having on

average 57 households giving a total of about 1,311 households. The school is situated to the western side of a tarmac road at a distance of about 150 meters. Along the road, which is close to the school, is a small, but very busy trading center that has electricity. At the trading center there are a number of small kiosks that sell groceries, and close to these kiosks is a maize mill and beer drinking joint that is well patronized by travelers during the evenings, especially weekends. Just next to the CDSS, about 50 meters away, there is a primary school with its teachers' houses that are electrified, but the CDSS and CDSS teachers' houses do not have electricity. Some teachers at the CDSS, including the head teacher, have left the teachers' houses and looked for electrified houses in the area to rent. The CDSS has three classroom blocks all lined up in a straight line. Each of the blocks has two classrooms. At the end of one of the blocks, one of the classrooms has been turned into a head teacher's office and a staff room. The head teacher's small office is also a library with students' books all over the floor and some books organized in two shelves. There are no trees shading the CDSS buildings, and the straight-lined construction makes it hard to find a gathering place at the school.

Mabuti CDSS is actually a repurposed primary school. When President Muluzi was running for his second term, he visited Mabuti and ordered that a new primary school be built there, including electrification and extremely nice primary school infrastructures. When the primary school moved to the new buildings, it left the three, well-used previous buildings empty. The local Member of Parliament decided that the buildings should be repurposed as a CDSS, and so Mabuti was created. It has no affiliation with any church or religious organization. There was no maintenance or upgrading done to the buildings when they were officially declared to be a CDSS. The

chalkboards inside the classrooms are almost unintelligible, the floors are deeply pitted, and the classrooms are entirely inaccessible for youth with disabilities because of a number of stairs leading up to each classroom. There are eight desks in the entire school and no teaching and learning materials are hanged or displayed in the classrooms. This means that students who move from Mabuti Primary School to Mabuti CDSS experience a significant decline in the quality of the buildings in which they are learning.

All the described features of the two sites have a bearing on the lives, education and well-being of the OVSs. Lack of or availability of businesses, land, trees, electricity, water, library, teacher's houses, staff /administration office, desks, teaching and learning materials, and good classroom blocks in these sites reflect the degree and type of community participation that was rendered to the school and the OVSs.

CDSS Enrollment, Staffing, and Teaching and Learning Potentials

During the semi-interviews with the head teachers and teachers we learnt that, as is the case at most rural CDSSs throughout Malawi, all the teachers at Mabuti and Londola were previously teaching at primary schools but were promoted without additional training to teach at the CDSSs. The only exceptions were the head teachers, one of whom had a degree and the other a diploma certificate. This pattern of teacher staffing has a number of implications. First, when CDSSs are created, some of the most experienced and/or highly qualified teachers in the primary school catchment areas are pulled out of the primary school and moved to the CDSS. This depletes the primary school capacity, and at the same time, the teachers receive little support in transitioning to being secondary school teachers. The teachers cited some secondary school teaching

skills and subject knowledge content challenges they faced due to this arrangement particularly in science and English subjects which are necessary for the students to get a pass in national exams. They said that primary school teachers often have little experience teaching these subjects, and therefore many feel uncomfortable innovating when teaching them. This is particularly problematic in cases where the CDSS does not have the required materials or equipment, as is usually the case with biology and chemistry labs, and primary school teachers seldom feel comfortable coming up with new solutions to teaching these subjects with locally-available equipment. Furthermore, some of the primary school teachers who are pulled up to CDSSs, even though occasionally do have some additional training in science topics just like their fellow teachers in regular secondary schools, do not have strong English skills. The teachers in regular schools are graduates from the University where English and Science subjects are taught hence have competence unlike those from primary school and promoted to teach at CDSS. This seriously disadvantages CDSS students because the language of instruction at the secondary level is English while at primary it was Chichewa until Standard 4, after which students officially transition to English (until the new Education Act that was enacted in 2013 which states that English will be the language of instruction from Standard 1). In practice, however, upper primary education is often held in a mix of languages, in part because primary school teachers themselves are often not fully comfortable speaking in English.

Just as the CDSSs staffing resulted in difficulties for many CDSS students, we observed that teaching and learning materials were also quite scarce. There were few books that students could read and there were no library facilities, hence the few books

were kept in the head teachers' office and scattered everywhere on the floor. We learnt through interviews that CDSSs had recently begun to charge students for their exam papers on which to print final exams, because even this cost had been decentralized to the school level. In the case of Londola, the primary school near the secondary school also did not have library materials, though pupils still received pens and notebooks from the government, distributed by the school. In the case of Mabuti, we observed that the primary school next to the secondary school had significantly more resources than the CDSS. The primary school, which had been opened up as a political offering by the then-campaigning president, has a library, electricity, and even some computers. The CDSS had none of these.

At both CDSSs, teachers, students and parents lamented that lack of electricity at the schools, even though it was very close to the CDSS's premises, significantly hampered successful performance of students as depicted from the interview I had with the head teacher from Londola:

> The situation without electricity here is very pathetic. You know Physical Science and Biology are some of the key subjects for the students to be considered for entry into most of the courses in universities and other colleges but …look! Here we are not able to do Physical Science and Biology practical sessions in laboratories hence most of our students do not do well! Their future is crippled by lack of this facility …electricity! The other challenging issue is that most students are not able to study because there is no electricity here. In some places, students go back to school for evening classes but not here! Apart from

this, teachers will be able to prepare their lessons well in advance [if we get electricity]. (July, 2012)

Indeed I observed that in Mabuti, some Form 2 and 4 secondary school students walked long distances from their homes to study in the evening (6.00 – 9.00 pm) at Mabuti primary school, where there was electricity.

The enrollment figures at Londola and Mabuti schools, displayed in Table 5 below, reflect a number of trends evident across many CDSSs in Malawi. Many CDSSs enroll around 200 to 300 students only, because as stated above, their infrastructure and teaching force cannot support a larger student population, even if there are more students who would like to enroll. Moreover, because of constraints with the pipeline of PSLE passers from primary to secondary school and because of uneven family and community support for girls' continued education, there are more boys than girls enrolled from Form 1 through Form 4 in these two schools, just as is the trend nationally.

Table 5: Total enrollment at Londola and Mabuti CDSSs, 2011/2012

Form/Class	**Londola CDSS**			**Mabuti CDSS**		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	52	40	92	45	38	83
2	62	60	122	40	32	72
3	32	26	58	43	36	79
4	12	7	19	41	33	74
Total	158	133	291	169	139	308

It should be noted that Londola CDSS has high Form 2 enrollment figures. We learnt that this is because the previous year the church insisted that they increase the intake in order for the church to have higher income from the student fees that would be selected into school by the religious body. The arrangement is that each student pays a development fee of K2,800 per term. Out of this amount, 50% is given to the church and 50% is utilized by the school for its development activities.

CDSSs and their students receive varying levels of support from the community. One contributing factor to these variations is the existing family and clan structures present in the area, as explained in the section that follows.

Matrilineal and patrilineal family structures and community organization

Londola CDSS and Mabuti CDSS practice matrilineal and patrilineal systems of marriage, respectively. These different family and clan structures and community organizations have a significant impact on OVCs' lives, both in terms of whether OVCs are viewed as full members of the community, and in terms of how easy it is for them to receive support to move between the community and the school. By traditional law, in patrilineal areas, the land belongs to the man, and the woman leaves her home to join her husband. Children who are born after *lobola* (bride price) is paid belong fully to the man's family. Land and other clan resources are readily controlled because the men who own the resources live right there. Traditionally, this results in the clan investing more in the man as the woman is expected to leave the clan after getting married. In contrast, in matrilineal areas, the land passes through the women's side of the family, particularly through her mother and her sisters. These brothers and uncles are the ones who leave the

land to marry elsewhere. This means that extended kin groups of women live in the same area across generations. The children born in matrilineal areas belong to the mother's family, but if they are boys, they are expected to eventually leave and settle elsewhere after getting married. However, it is the uncles to the children (brothers to the women) that are expected to have authority of the children born to their sisters. This causes some problems with controlling the land, because those with authority (the brothers and uncles) move away to marry, and in this part of the southern region, many resettle elsewhere, or migrate out for work. The current functioning and implications of these systems in Londola and Mabuti are described further below and also in table 6.

Londola

When approaching the villages that serve as the catchment area for Londola CDSS, visitors will observe that there is no regular housing pattern and one cannot easily demarcate the boundaries between one clan/village and the other, as the houses are so closely spaced. The only feature that seems to act as a boundary between families or villages is a network of small footpaths, which at times pass very close to a kitchen or main house. If one is not fortunate, at times someone can easily throw water on him / her from the kitchen as one passes by. Most of the houses are made of burnt bricks and the roofs are made of either grass or corrugated iron sheets (depending upon the wealth of the family).

In this matrilineal and matrilocal society, the origins of the people whose houses are close together can be traced from the grandmother on the maternal side. For example, the sisters from one mother all live close together in one village and the husbands of these sisters come from their homes and settle in the village. It is the uncle

of the sisters who has traditional authority over these women, as opposed to their father. One can thus observe children from a particular clan having different surnames (from the same mother but different fathers), even though the surnames of the mothers of such children are the same. It is very rare to find an elderly brother of the sisters living where his sisters are living except for cases where the brother buys a piece of land close to his sisters and decides to settle on that piece of land with his wife.

During the time of my research I noted that many children, if not most children, in this area enrolled in primary school but dropped out of school even before reaching Standard 4. Very few went up to secondary school. This is a common pattern in this southern part of the country, which, for a number of reasons, including the association of schooling with Christianity (the Muslim parents being afraid that their children will be taught Christianity and other values that are contrary to Muslim at school), historically has lower enrollment and retention rates than the Central or Northern regions (Maluwa Banda, 2003). In this largely Muslim area, the attachment of Londola school to Christianity (because of its relationship to the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP)), still causes some similar problems.

This pattern of low overall enrollment in primary school, much less secondary school, meant that the students who attended the CDSS were not the "norm" for the community. Indeed, many children, whether orphaned or not, did not attend school, and there was no expectation on the part of parents, leaders, or teachers that students would complete primary, much less transition to secondary. This affected the educational support that OVSs received, because no one expected any student to necessarily

continue to secondary school, and they certainly did not expect children who were struggling or who had few resources to attempt to continue with school.

In Londola, the homes and the villages are packed closely together and there is no visible periphery where you can see the placement of orphaned, vulnerable, or otherwise "out of place" children. Most children that have lost their fathers in Londola stay with their mothers or grandmothers, who are the owners of the land and yet do not have well-constructed houses to accommodate such large numbers of orphans (See Photo 2 for an example of an average grandmother-headed home, in which the grandmother is keeping eight grandchildren in a one-room home). Despite the often crowded and sometimes dilapidated housing conditions, these children's sense of belonging is not as challenging as for children around Mabuti in the north amongst the patrilineal marriage systems whenever it happens that the mothers go back to their birth families, (land where they were born) due to divorce or death of their husband.

According to the research findings, in case of the death of the husband, most of the children in patrilineal system, accompanied their mothers to their birth families. This usually happened if the deceased woman is young and the patrilineal side had decided that she be not inherited by a brother or relative of the deceased husband and also when the deceased husband's family did not pay lobola. I learnt that the practice of not inheriting the deceased wife is becoming common now due to HIV/AIDs as people are afraid of contracting HIV/AIDs virus. However, the relatives of the deceased are at times willing to support the children while they are with the wife. The widow is free to get married if she wanted to when not inherited by the deceased relative. This usually happens if the widow is also young, around the ages of 40 years and below. Whenever

the widow goes to her land of birth with the children, I was informed that the children are considered "out of place" in the homeland of their mothers and regarded as not belonging to that community or land.

In matrilineal system, where children have lost their mothers, the fathers return to their land of birth. Whenever the fathers try to take the children with them, such children, just like in patrilineal system where widowed mothers go to their land of birth, also face the same problem highlighted above of not belonging. However, these cases of fathers taking children to their land of birth, are fewer in matrilineal system because, in cases where the mother has died, a child is more likely to be kept by the deceased wife's relatives, especially the grandmother than to be left and be cared for by the father.

Photo 2: Typical grandmother-headed household in Londola

Mabuti

Unlike Londola, in the patrilineal and patrilocal Mabuti area the houses are constructed in a regular pattern and each clan, most of which are composed of a few houses, is spaced further apart from the other. The shortest distance between clan compounds is not less than half a kilometer from each other. This pattern is also due to more land being available per person in the north. The footpaths in this area usually join one clan to the other but do not navigate close to the houses. The footpath will end at the edge of a clan cluster of houses, and then there will be a path through the cluster that usually leads past the front of the homes. One will get a cluster of houses belonging to the clan of Mkandawires, Nhlemas, Kumwendas, etc. However, in each clan there are a few isolated houses of burnt bricks with corrugated iron sheet roofs, which belong to the tobacco growers in the clan. It is rare to see a large number of houses under one clan cluster as most family members who are educated move away into town for employment. Where you find an increased number of houses in a clan, it means many members of the family are not educated, as was echoed by Mr. Munthali:

> Where you see many houses of one clan it is a sign that not many men from that clan are educated hence have not gone away from the village to look for employment. They all stay close together and are usually poor. They do not care about education at all. In such clan settings there are no groceries to buy even small things like sugar, salt, etc. The people have to walk 5 kilometers away! (Nov, 2012)

As one passes through such type of clans, one sees a number of children playing in the village during school time. When asked the reason, parents and community

leaders from the clan will say "these children are a problem. They do not like school and we just leave them but they will realize their mistakes when they have grown up!" Lack of education has led to such parents not encouraging their children to go on with education, let alone disciplining their children whenever they do not go to school.

While there are less uneducated clans in the area, most clans strongly encourage their children to pursue education. Historically in the northern area, schooling has been highly valued because most of those that had attained some education earlier on got employment, usually through the civil service, during the colonial and early postcolonial era. They acted as role models in the way they lived. However, I was told that these days some boys from educated clans will refuse to continue schooling to pursue tobacco farming. However, the value of schooling is generally still very high, both in the region and in many clans. In both these more highly educated and less educated clans, you will find orphans working hard and going to CDSSs. In these less educated clans, something seemed to be a fountain of encouragement to these OVSs that was beyond parental encouragement, for they had none.

Regardless of the clan size, the construction pattern of clan compounds (which is relatively round), creates a center and periphery of each clan area. Resources that belong to the clan, such as boreholes and groceries, are usually located towards the center of the settlement, so too are the homes of clan leaders. It is common in clans to see homes belonging to the marginal (and marginalized) family members built far on the periphery area of the clan. These homes are often less well-off than those that one usually finds at or towards the center. Household survey data that I collected indicated that these homes situated on the peripheral were most often of children living with one or no parent, and

quite commonly, this was a maternal relative (which is not the norm in this patrilineal area). For example, in the Zgatho clan, there is only one child, Matambo Zgatho, who is learning at Mabuti CDSS. In fact, Matambo Zgatho does not actually belong to this clan but he comes from Rumphi district. He came to stay in this village with his mother after the death of his father due to AIDS. This is the case with most children who lost their fathers in this area - they return with their mothers to the mother's home area (Case, Paxson & Ableidinger, 2004).

Similar to many other women who came back to settle at their land of birth after the death of their husbands or after divorce, I observed that Matambo's mother and her children were given land at the periphery of the clan to settle and cultivate and which had very poor soils (See Photo 3 below). This is exactly what was stated by Freudenberger (1994) that women usually have cultivation rights to best land through their male relations (husbands in this case) and those who do not have social position (like those not married) may have access only to marginal land. It should also be noted, as explained by Yngstrom (2002) that African women gain most of their access to land and the means to work on it through marriage. Since Mrs. Zgatho is no longer married here, she has no land. However, the significance of this settlement pattern is that it shows they do not belong to this place, which is also problematic to supporting the clan's OVCs in their education, as stated by one of the school committee member of the CDSS about Mrs. Zgatho:

> You see, traditionally, the mother and the child do not belong to the clan. She was married to Mr. Zgatho in Rumphi. That is where she belongs. Even though the husband died, she has children that belong to the Zgatho clan and those

children are not part of this clan here. You cannot therefore put them at the center of the clan when it comes to constructing a house. They do not even have land – so you see they are given that land which is at the margins of the clan. Any time they will go where they belong (December, 2012)

Photo 3: Matambo's home at the edge of the village

Changing Ideas of Belonging

The descriptions about Londola and Mabuti make clear, as the AIDS epidemic has continued and as pressures for surviving locally have increased, that new living arrangements have resulted for children and families. A key question for understanding community, participation, and indeed the definition of who counts as an orphan or vulnerable child, who belongs to a community, is how communities are making sense of

children and relatives who historically would have been considered "out of place" in the matrilineal or the patrilineal area? One way of gaining insight into this is to map living arrangements (as described above). Another is to explore when, how, and which people work together and share resources collectively in each community.

One element that is common amongst both the matrilineal and patrilineal societies concerns "working collectively together", particularly amongst women. The sisters of a particular clan, the wives of husbands of a particular clan, and other people from the village cooperate and work together during funerals, weddings, and other ceremonies (such as initiation ceremonies). During such events they support each other through shared provision of maize flour, relish, firewood (which is very scarce in both areas), and water. There is a hidden power that moves the individuals to help, which Pyror, as he quotes Bourdieu (1997), calls a relationship of mutual solicitation with the field (Pyror, 2005).

While this sense of togetherness still appears to be quite strong during these particular events, this cooperation and togetherness is rarely observed in supporting orphaned students in their education especially if the children are regarded as not belonging to a particular clan. When I asked some community members during a focus group discussion in Mabuti as to what makes them work so much together during events like weddings and funerals, they narrated (reconstructed):

> You see many members during funerals and weddings willingly provide food, firewood, water because they are afraid that next time it will be either myself or my relation and if I do not attend or provide support, my friends will not help

me! We help someone during such events because we want them to help us when we are also in a fix. (November, 2012)

I realized that this is an unwritten and self-enforced law of reciprocity in case of an inevitable happening that usually operates amongst the kinship and helps to govern the society. Many members stated that they knew that one day one of their relations will die or conduct a wedding so they would like the people from their society to provide support during that time. If they did not support their friends when they were faced with such events, their friends would also not come to support them. This type of behavior in these communities is being enforced by what Fehr, Fischbacher and Gachter (2002) call strong reciprocity. I believe most development partners and organizations have this concept of "communities working collective together" when developing their programs that hinge on community participation in supporting OVSs but, as stated by the community members, this is more pronounced where it is evident there will be reciprocity.

Given this rationale, it may seem strange to note that very few altruistic community members exist who think of helping an orphan today, neither do we find many of those with reciprocal altruism even though everyone is well aware that there is a strong likelihood that their children or direct relatives will become orphans one of these days, as they all acknowledged that death rates have increased. It appears that death is so close and yet so distant in people's mind.

At the same time, I was informed that other traditional forms of community participation where the members from a village would actively support each other in raising up children in the community have also declined. For example, I was told by

participants in my research that in the past whenever a mother or father of child had gone away to a hospital or to attend a funeral somewhere far from the village, the people from within the village could easily take into their home the child that was left behind. They could feed the child and provide all the necessary support until the parents came back from their errands. Similarly, whenever a child was practicing truancy by playing with friends on the road, any adult that saw this child on the road playing would reprimand them and take them to school. The other example was that in the past all boys from 8-15 years of age from a clan would sleep in one house that the elders from the clan would come together to build for them; this was called *gowelo*. This was also true for the girls that were between 8-15 years old. People reported that this type of community participation had seriously declined since democracy. During the time I was there conducting my research, I rarely saw adults feeding or disciplining any child that did not belong to them but was from the clan, and was told that *gowelo* had ended because each family did not want to share food with the whole group of children anymore.

One Form one student, John Zimaluphya, when asked what could be the reasons behind the members of the society not supporting the education of orphans the way they were doing during weddings or funerals, answered the following to explain the shrinking of communal support for children:

> This cannot be done. They think they will not personally benefit anything from the student who is not directly related to them after he/she gets educated. Even a direct relation…if you have relatives that are less educated, that did not go far in quest of education, it becomes harder for them to help. (November, 2012)

Some people are supporting their own relatives' education not because of the love of education but because by doing so they expect to directly benefit. Thus, investing (literally) in the child's future is done for one's own return, reciprocal altruism, and not for the sake of education or for the sake of the child alone. If a child's situation is judged to be very precarious or irredeemable, or if people believe the child will not pass well, then they are less likely to support the child's education. This is particularly the case for girls, as it is believed by many that they may spoil their education by becoming pregnant, and that they are less able to secure employment after school.

In principle, there are a number of factors that seem to be driving these changes in the communities. Altruism, which is a behavior that some people display by supporting someone without expecting anything in return or depending upon the behavior of the person they would like to support (Fehr, Fischbacher & Gachter, 2002) is dwindling because the cost of living has generally gone up and as such people are not able to generate enough funds to support their families and have some extra to help others. Secondly there is a lot of individualism and people are focused on amassing wealth for themselves. This behavior started to be displayed more after the country attained multi-party in 1994. Everyone ventured into business as advocated by the president that governed during that time and their minds concentrated on how they would get rich and in the processes regarded helping somebody whom you would not get anything in return as a burden. Thirdly, reciprocal altruism makes it difficult to support orphans that have moved away from their home and have gone to stay at their mother's land of birth following the death of their fathers. The relatives of the orphan's mother do not see any long term benefits in supporting these children and always think they will go

back to their father's land of birth after they have grown up as long as lobola (dowry) was paid. Previously, according to patrilineal culture, such children would have stayed at their father's land of birth and be cared for by the mother (who also usually stayed at the deceased husband's home and be re-married to a brother or cousin of the deceased) and the other relatives.

Brothers and Uncles

In both the matrilineal and patrilineal societies of Malawi, brothers are still highly regarded as the people who are to be approached by their sisters in case of any problems in the village (clan) concerning children and families. However, my research indicates that orphans in both matrilineal and patrilineal systems have a particularly difficult time accessing the system of uncle support. The uncles in Londola, as would be expected in the matrilineal system, usually stayed at the homes of their wives, which at times were far from the places where their sisters' orphaned children lived.

In patrilineal Mabuti, many orphaned students were living at their mothers' original home, actually 75% of those I had sampled, thereby making it difficult for them to readily access the support they traditionally were to get from the uncles from their paternal side. They thus rely on the uncles from the maternal side, which has its own complications because such orphans are still mostly regarded as belonging to the deceased husband's home as long as the husband had paid lobola. They do have challenges to get land, financial support, or even emotional support from their mother's land of birth. This raises again the essential question of orphans and their belonging in the midst of the economic and cultural changes that are currently taking place in Malawi.

The uncles from the maternal side but from the area that practices patrilineal system (Mabuti) that I had interviewed felt that it was generally good to support a sister's child who had lost a father. However, they explained that these days they were facing financial challenges due to the high cost of living, with an inflation rate of 29.5% (Munthali, 2014). When quizzed, they revealed that they also thought the orphan child did not belong to the clan, hence after getting educated s/he will go back to her/his deceased father's home and provide support to the "real" relatives, as stated by Mr. Nkhamoza:

> You know these children have their home. My sister was married and they paid lobola. As much as she is here with us she still belongs to the Mhanyaunos. The children she has are the Mhanyaunos. We are keeping them here and we are providing all the support that they need since the Mhanyaunos seem not to care. But you know what, these children when they grow up and get educated, the Mhanyaunos will come and claim ownership, especially that they had paid lobola. And most times, when children grow up they trace their roots and they will go back to their homes – they know they have uncles and when they go back home then they will start supporting those relatives. It is very rare that these children even remember us here when they go back to their homes (November, 2012)

The uncles' responses were unlike the responses given by the grandparents of the students, who generally embraced these grandchildren and their daughter who came from the husband's home as their own and did everything to support their wellbeing in the village. With the changing of times, the fears expressed by the uncles that the

children would go back to their deceased father's land of birth, are quite unfounded. Most orphan children struggle to get a place where they can settle and call it a home. The deceased father's relations usually grab the land and wealth that belonged to the deceased and are not too keen to see the children of the deceased back to their father's land of birth.

In matrilineal Londola, the uncles' stories were quite similar to those of Mabuti. However, it should be stated that the maternal uncles, according to culture, are supposed to take care of the children even when the father or mother are still alive. But these days, there are some cultural changes that are taking place. Some fathers and mothers are taking care of their children and in cases where such parents have passed away, that responsibility is transferred to the maternal uncles but, as stated earlier on the uncles usually leave the responsibility to the grandparents. In cases where the wife has passed away, as per matrilineal tradition, the husband is allowed to go back to his land of birth and the children's responsibility is also left in the hands of the maternal grandmothers and uncles but I observed that fathers still played a significant role in supporting their children from where they were residing. During the interviews most uncles complained of the financial hardships they were facing, and hence the challenges they had in supporting their orphaned nephews and nieces. The effects of uncles not being able to support their nieces and nephews because of financial hardships, coupled with the cultural changes, have led to most living fathers taking care of the orphan children when their wives have passed away. The responsibility of supporting the children is thus transferred from the uncles to the fathers who are usually settled in their land of birth or the land that they had bought while the children are being cared for by the grandmothers

where they reside. This is vindicated by the many number of students (70% of the 30% that had lost their mothers) that I met in Londola whose fees and other needs are being provided by the fathers, when usually these fees would have been paid by maternal uncles. The interview I had with Mr. Saona, an uncle to one of the students, is a further testimony to the changing dynamics in the culture:

> These days when one marries, he should be prepared to take care of his children. The days where one thought he can have as many children as possible hoping someone will take care of his children are gone! I have a brother in-law that married my sister and has a daughter that is there at Londola CDSS. I used to help the daughter with school fees but you see one day he went and got drunk and shouted at me saying "why are you helping my child? Is she your child? Leave her I will be helping her myself. She is my child!" So…you see I stopped helping her and he is paying fees for her. If it were in the old days we would have reprimanded him but nowadays with economic challenges we are facing I thought that was a chance for me to concentrate on educating my children! Things are changing. (February, 2013)

The research findings suggest that the change towards focusing on natal investment or at least, the change in uncles' support for nieces and nephews is affecting matrilineal and patrilineal societies alike. In instances where the father has passed away and the widow has moved to her land of birth, she usually takes with her the children. In such cases, the children are usually supported by the mother and the relatives from the matrilineal side with rare support from relatives from the patrilineal side. And since an increased number of orphan children that lost a father are living without uncles' support,

but only with their mothers' support (who, according to patrilineal system, in neither matrilineal nor patrilineal areas have direct claim to resources like land), the resources available to children through their father's or mother's relatives in many cases appears simply to be more precarious. However, where both parents passed away, I observed and learnt that the orphans usually stayed with grandparents who struggled to feign for them, with very limited occasional help from the uncles leading to many orphans feigning for themselves. In other cases where older siblings are available, they stepped in to help their sisters or brothers.

Father's death in patrilineal system

The family structure in the patrilineal family system is no longer the way it used to be when the husband passes away. In the past, I was informed, the wife, after the husband has passed away, would stay at the husband's home with the children and cultivate the land that she had been allocated for usufruct as a wife but does not inherit it. But nowadays this is changing. In Mabuti area, I observed that most women who had lost their husbands had returned to the land of their birth with their children. In my sampled participants 40% of the OVSs stay with mothers who had returned to their land of birth. This is especially true for widows aged between 30 – 45 years old. However, most of the women aged 50 years old and above who had lost their husbands were staying with their children at the home of their deceased husbands. In the first instance, where the widows have gone back to their land of birth, the support that the children receive comes from their mother or relatives of their mother with very limited occasional support from relations of the deceased husband. This is unlike in the second scenario,

where, as would historically have been the case, the children receive much support from the mother and the relatives of their deceased father.

The older pattern also had its own challenges, as will be seen from the relationships of support that the children experience in the section that follow. But as highlighted earlier on, in the first scenario, where children and their mothers are "out of place," there is a question of belonging to one or another family that simply does not exist in the second scenario where the mother and the children reside at the deceased husband home. This question of belonging puts many children of this generation in a catch-22[8], as they are facing a tumultuous economic and social period in which the historical pattern of wanting to claim as many children as possible for the patriliny or matriliny (because children were viewed as the embodiment of a supported future for adults), is shifting to wanting to limit claims as money, land, and other resources become more and more scarce.

Mother's death in patrilineal system

In the case where the mother passed away in patrilineal societies, in the past the children stayed with the father and they were cared for by either a step-mother (if the father got married again) or the relatives of the husband (i.e., the sisters or the father's brothers' wives or the mother of the father (grandmother of the children)). However, there are quite a number of cases in the community today where the children of the

[8] A dilemma or difficult circumstance from which there is no escape because of mutually conflicting or dependent conditions –there is no way to do a second thing without doing the first and there is no way to do the first without doing the second e.g. children can't belong unless they are able to bring some resources to the table, but they can't get resources unless they belong

deceased wife are living with their grandmother and grandfather from the deceased woman's side, more definite where dowry was not paid. The interviewees stated that this is the case nowadays because fathers with their new wives and their patrilineal relations are known to be abusive to the orphans hence most relatives of the deceased wife prefer that the children live at the maternal home. This is also now very common amongst children who have lost both parents, but this is a new pattern that relegates the children to a new status of non-belonging, thereby having no claim to land or to family support.

Death of both parents

Where both parents in the matrilineal family system are dead, the historical and current structures are in some ways different but in some cases similar to the patrilineal family system. One thing that is similar is that most children end up staying at the home of their deceased mother. One factor that I had observed that contributed to this was that most times the husbands passed away earlier than the wives hence the children were cared for by the mother, who when passed away left the children in the hands of the grandmothers and the relations of the woman (i.e. sister or mother or brother of the deceased woman). I observed that many students live at their deceased mothers' home cared for by the grandparents. This is an indication that the traditional patterns of determining who belongs where in Malawian communities are in flux. As mentioned earlier on, according to matrilineal and patrilineal culture the uncles and relations from the mother's and father's side, respectively, are supposed to provide support to the student, but the poor economic conditions and changes in culture are affecting this tradition. This is leading to many orphans lacking support and fending for themselves,

even in cases where the orphan would historically have been part of the clan. This has a greater impact on the girl students and their education as depicted in the following section, which highlights the life experiences of OVSs in each area.

These shifting historical/cultural patterns, due to death of parents, in matrilineal area have led to the orphan children sometimes going to stay with their fathers at the death of their mothers. For example, in Londola area, I came across a Form 4 girl student that is staying with her father after the death of her mother. During interviews the girl said she is staying with her father because there is no land at her mother's place and she wants a piece of land where she can grow cassava, which she can sell in order to be able to pay her secondary school fees. This was echoed by her father:

> This is my daughter and she lives with me here. Her mother passed away three years ago when she had just been selected for her secondary education. You know, I used to live there (*pointing a finger),* across that stream there in Kumbukani village. After my wife passed away, you know our culture here…I had to come here at my father's home. I was fortunate that I had a piece of land here…my brother and myself have land here because you see we came here sometime from Phalombe and this is our father's land so we live here with our sisters. So at my wife's place there is no land…but my daughter needed school fees and she asked me if I could allow her to cultivate part of the land where she could grow cassava and sale it. I am old and cannot cultivate all this land … (*pointing a finger showing the boundary*)…from there to that tree up to there! (July, 2012)

The table below is aimed at summarizing all the above narrated changes occurring in matrilineal and patrilineal traditional kinship system due to death of the father, or mother or both parents in relation to the orphaned children.

Table 6: Changes in patrilineal / matrilineal traditional kinship system

Traditional system	Historical/ cultural	Death of father	Death of mother	Death of both parents
Matrilineal	Children belong to mother's kin, the uncles; but nowadays father & mother assuming more responsibility	Children stay with mother at her birth land & taken care by uncle, mother & her relations; nowadays mothers assuming more responsibility	Children stay with mother at her birth land & taken care by uncle & her relations especially maternal grandparents. Fathers assuming more responsibility	Children stay with grandparents from maternal side. Uncles rarely support
Patrilineal	Children belong to father & father's kin	Children & mother stay at deceased husband home if she is 50 years and above. No widow inheritance - young widows return to her land of birth with children; she is allowed to marry. Limited support from deceased father's relation	Children stay with father or father's relations like sisters; Nowadays, some children stay at deceased mother's home with grandparents more so where dowry was not paid	Children stay with grandparents of either the deceased father or deceased mother. Many cases children are staying with grandparents of deceased mother; dwindling dowry payment practice

While changes in the family structure / kinship and community organization have an effect in the way the OVSs are supported in their education, community participation towards the establishment and management of the CDSSs also plays a crucial role in the education of the OVSs, as depicted in the following section.

Community participation in CDSS establishment

There are a number of moving parts in thinking about whether, how, and which OVCs might receive support to attend CDSSs. One piece, described in the previous section, is dependent upon which OVCs are viewed as belonging to the community. On the other side, as described below, depends upon the willingness of various factions of the community to support or to value the CDSS.

Londola

According to the education officials at the South Eastern Education Division (SEED) office, Londola CDSS is a government of Malawi CDSS, founded in response to community requests (and significant community labor and inputs) for a CDSS in a previously underserved area. As the MoEST Desk Officer for the division put it during the interview:

> You know we have 4 National Secondary Schools, 6 District Boarding Secondary Schools, 11 district day secondary schools, and 78 Community Day Secondary Schools. Out of the 78 CDSS, 70 are in typical rural areas. These CDSS were requested by the community through their Members of Parliament

> and we went to evaluate the infrastructures available at the place i.e. at least two classrooms and two teachers' houses were to be available before we approved the opening of the CDSS. We also looked at the distance from primary schools from where the students would be selected to the secondary school. As government, we provided teachers at the school after being satisfied of the available infrastructure and the number of students available from the primary schools which would feed into the secondary school. The other thing that we check is the availability of bricks moulded by the community. (May, 2012)

When I started data collection, however, I was informed by the head teacher and some parents that this CDSS belongs to the CCAP, which is also the proprietor of the nearby primary school. Mr. Mkwandirila, a PTA member, told me:

> Londola CDSS that you see over there belongs to CCAP. CCAP is the one that went to ask for the CDSS after seeing that very few learners from the primary schools that are being run by them were able to access the conventional secondary school due to limited space available at such secondary schools. Even the land where CDSS is established belongs to CCAP. You see that house next to the CDSS? That house belongs to the CCAP Reverend Mumankakuti. Previously, that house is where the head teacher for the CDSS used to stay before they constructed one over there. (June, 2012)

Community claims that the CDSS belongs to the CCAP do not fall easily into existing government secondary school categorizations. The government registers CDSSs in two categories only: approved and not approved community day secondary schools. The government does not categorize any CDSS as grant-aided CDSSs, unlike grant-

aided primary schools and conventional (district or national) secondary schools which are owned by churches but aided by government. Londola CDSS, then, represents an interesting and potentially important hybrid arrangement between organizations that have long provided schooling in Malawi (churches), the government, and communities as all three of these bodies attempt to expand secondary schooling while determining who has the right and the responsibility to provide these services. This arrangement is not unique to Londola, but it does call for more probing into the role of parents and various community leaders, including church and political leaders; how CDSSs are established; how they are being run; and how this affects the support that is provided to OVSs by the community and other stakeholders.

Many CDSSs, including Londola CDSS, were established following the introduction of FPE in 1994 and the government's call for the communities to request a CDSS wherever there were some school blocks that were not in use or that had been recently constructed for such a purpose. The village headmen, motivated by the religious leaders from Londola CCAP church, mobilized people from the six surrounding primary schools to mould bricks and construct some infrastructure, including teachers' houses and school blocks, in order to have a CDSS at Londola. This was narrated by Group Village Headman Lamulira:

> You see, around this area the ones that introduced education are the CCAP religious people. Most of us did not know about education before CCAP came here. We are the ones that moulded the bricks for the primary school due to the problem that we had in this area. Most of our children, even though they passed Standard 8 examinations, were not being selected to go to secondary school.

> When the government of Malawi said that the people could request for a secondary as long as they could construct some school blocks and teacher's house, the CCAP people called for a meeting which was attended by all the seven Group Village Headmen that surround the school. During the meeting we agreed that each village headman was to mould 100,000 bricks. As for me and the people in my village, we contributed money which was utilized in hiring some people to mould bricks for us because it is a bit far for us to go to that place and mould bricks for ourselves. Each family was asked to contribute K1,000.00 regardless whether they had a child who was going to school or not. You see this is development work so everyone has to take part. (June, 2012)

The government provided some grant money to Londola to construct more classroom blocks using the bricks that the communities had moulded. During the establishment phase, I learnt that the community was consulted on what was needed to be done and they gave in their input. The members from the village stated that they felt their input was considered when decisions were being made hence thought they had equal power in decision-making with the religious leaders and government officials that guided them. However, after the establishment of the school, things changed. The government was responsible for recruiting and paying teachers (even though the head teacher for the CDSS was to be endorsed by the church or had to belong to the church as the church thought the school belonged to them) and for selecting 50% of the students to the school from the surrounding primary schools (regardless of their faith religion). However, 50% of student positions are filled by the CCAP church members' children. This is not an officially sanctioned arrangement, as there are officially no religiously-

sponsored secondary schools, but I was told it is the arrangement that everyone, including teachers, students, and parents had agreed upon for this school.

As stated earlier on, 50% of the students selected by CCAP to the secondary school belonged to the CCAP church and came from the surrounding primary schools. After the first year of selection, the community members, including school committee members who were not consulted on this arrangement, cried foul and boycotted doing any development work at the school. Some Muslim members of the school committee resigned from their positions. The chiefs failed to motivate and mobilize their subjects to engage in any more development work at school. Currently, one can only see the school blocks and teachers' houses that were constructed by parents before the students were enrolled at the school and some few grant-aided infrastructures. There is also a new teacher's house that is under construction whose funds came from the school development funds that students pay as part of their regular fees. During informal and formal interviews I learnt that since 1996, the rest of the community members have withdrawn their support from physically adding new buildings each year and improving the general infrastructure except for the few parents whose children are learning at the CDSS and the Christian religious denomination. At present, there is no additional work being done at school by the community.

The shift in what composes the community is vividly depicted in the Londola CDSS scenario: before the establishment of the CDSS, all the people and village heads from the surrounding primary schools comprised the community, but now, it is the parents that have children at the CDSS that are called "the community". The shrinking of the "community" could be attributed to what was said earlier on, the perception that

education is for individual gains hence individual parents of the children learning at school must be the ones to render the support. The teachers at the CDSS complain that the community no longer cares for the education of their students as they do not come to haul sand, mould bricks, and donate labor and monies. As one teacher explained:

> We are just utilizing the school development fund that students pay for repairing desks etc…even that house you see over there (pointing to the newly house being constructed), we take funds from the development fund which is very little. Instead of buying some textbooks and other learning materials we are buying bricks which should have been moulded by parents. They do not come for development work here at school. (July, 2012)

The 50% of the students selected into the CDSS by the CCAP complicate the situation as the religious people state that such students are selected from the community while parents from the villages reject the idea that these students represent their community. This malaise has spilled over into the selection and support of orphan and vulnerable children, as one of the village heads explained:

> You see, we have children in the village here who are orphans. We have been supporting such children during their primary education. There is this organization called VENIKO and they encouraged us to be providing these orphans with some school materials like note books, soap and others to supplement what they [the extended families] do provide. But when these children pass standard 8 examinations, we are not given a chance to suggest to the school committee at CDSS or government that they select these students…yes, even to give their names so that they be considered for bursaries.

> We are the ones that live with these orphans and vulnerable students but we are not consulted. They just do things on their own. The religious leaders also chose only those from their faith. (June, 2012)

This situation has led to these community members be unwilling to support the OVSs further education at this CDSS, just as they do not support the CDSS anymore.

The reverend for the CCAP church that stays in the house adjacent to the CDSS explained that the 50% of the students selected to CDSS by the church is done in order to encourage its church members to work hard in class and also to raise more funds for the church since the development fee (about K2,800 per student per year or term) that these 50% of selected students pay goes to the church instead of the school. The church usually selects students that are able to pay their school and actually only about 5% of the 50% were orphans. The quest to get more funds for the church ended up overloading the CDSS's classes in 2011, when the church selected more students than the classrooms could take. The new head teacher that came in 2010, who was not vetted by the church, went and complained to the Ministry of Education officials at the Education Division but was told to go and talk to the church officials. The government said it did not have power when it came to selecting the church member students into the CDSS. The church could choose as many as it thought could be accommodated into the class.

This change in power dynamics has affected the way certain segments of the community participate in Londola CDSS and the quality of the school, as the church appears to be overloading the school with pupils to collect the development fees. The parents, school management committee, and village leaders have little power over who gets selected into the CDSS and who is to be supported. OVCs are thus at cross-roads

when they are about to be selected for secondary education. The government has said that it will not attempt to rein in church leaders and their use of the school for the church's profit, even when the church's involvement threatens the wellbeing of the school. The government is also not willing to address the school fee issue, which has resulted in the school increasing fees even more so that the 50 percent of fees they receive (CCAP students' fees go directly to the church) can cover basic maintenance. Teachers have complained, but have been turned back to negotiate with the church leaders. SMC members have complained and resigned, but this has had no effect on the situation. For OVCs who wish to continue to secondary school, Londola is often their only opportunity for doing so. They, however, have even less say in decisions made about how the school will operate. The high fees charged by the school make it prohibitive for the most poor children and families, and CCAP's heavy interference in the school has made it difficult for Muslim OVCs to secure support from their families to attend the school. This issue of the OVCs' needs being deeply decentered from educational decision-making or systems was examined in Chapter Four.

Mabuti

The concept of community that functions in Mabuti CDSS is quite different from that of Londola. Mabuti CDSS is surrounded by three primary schools that act as the catchment area for students. Unlike Londola CDSS, the establishment of Mabuti CDSS has political, rather than religious, roots. The school was established in 1996 following a visit to the primary school by the then-State President of Malawi. During the rally he informed the community members that he was going to build more primary school

blocks at the school. Indeed, the government almost immediately brought in contractors to mould cement blocks and construct new school blocks. The parents, SMC, teachers and village heads were mere observers in this exercise.

After a full set of very updated and well-stocked school blocks were constructed for the primary school, the members of the community asked the Member of Parliament (MP) to approach the District Education Manager so that the government could open a CDSS at Mabuti. The new CDSS could utilize some of the old primary school blocks that were no longer being used by the primary school. The foundation of the CDSS therefore required very little initial engagement by community members. The CDSS was opened because there were more primary school blocks and not necessarily because the communities saw the need to have a CDSS in their community. The government approved the opening of the CDSS using the old primary school blocks, but there was still a need for teachers' houses, administration offices, and a library. Since there was no original community initiative to call for the establishment of the CDSS in the area, it took some time for new development work to be organized and to get community members in the catchment area to agree to participate.

Currently, and only following a significant leadership transition in 2012, the parents, SMC members and the village heads from the surrounding primary schools are moulding more bricks and constructing teachers' houses. The situation here is unlike that at Londola CDSS. Most people from the surrounding primary schools who had children enrolled at Mabuti CDSS participated in the development work at the CDSS. At Londola, the parents, school management committee and village heads stopped their participation after the first selection of students to Londola CDSS was made. In contrast,

the various members interviewed in Mabuti areas attribute the increasing participation of parents, SMCs and village heads in development work at CDSS to the strong realization that their children and relations need education for a bright future. For example, an SMC member stated:

> Mmmm…today for someone to have a bright future, he /she needs education. Without education one is doomed. So you see everyone knows this in our area and that is why we all come to build a teacher's house or mould bricks. This is one way of helping our children. Even if one does not have a secondary school going child, he / she still comes to work at the school because one of his /her relation will one day learn at this school…One cannot just say "because I have no secondary school children, I will not go" No! Maybe it will be his/her grandchildren or someone from extended family relations that will learn here. (October, 2012)

It should be noted, however, that this reason to participate in school development (because one's own child or relative may someday benefit) does not rest on the belief of some people being part of one's family and others not but upon future benefits someone may gain. Here we again se the concept of reciprocity being in operation. This is similar to the issue of OVSs belonging or not belonging in that some people provide support with a hope that they may benefit from him or her in the future. In the above scenario, it may affect individual decisions about whether to support the school or not, even as all children from the catchment area benefit from the shared adult belief that they or their relatives may someday benefit from the school.

Selection of students from the surrounding primary school to Mabuti CDSS was only done by the government. However, here too the parents, SMC, and village heads complained about their lack of participation in identification of OVSs for possible support by government through bursaries. Much of the school development fund at Mabuti CDSS that is paid by the students is utilized to purchase books and repair infrastructure. Funds are not used to provide bursaries or specific support that particularly suffice the needs of the OVSs, and so it is only through internal family or external government or NGO support that these students might receive the resources that would suffice individual needs.

Table 7 below depicts the external support that OVSs received at each school and the process that was followed to determine who would receive support. These processes were similar across Londola and Mabuti CDSSs.

Table 7: External support provided to OVSs at Londola and Mabuti CDSSs

Support provided	Who provided support	When	Process followed
School fees	NGOs, CBOs	Beginning of term before 2 weeks expire	Identification done by the head teacher by checking the frequency of absenteeism of the students
	Government of Malawi	Anytime, sometimes after the whole term	Identification of OVSs bursary beneficiaries by head teachers
Learning materials (exercise notebooks, pens, pencils, mathematical instruments,)	NGOs	Beginning of term before 2 weeks expire	Identification done by the head teacher by checking the frequency of absenteeism of the students
Clothes (school uniform, school shoes)	NGOs, CBOs	Beginning of term before 2 weeks expire	Identification done by the head teacher by checking the frequency of absenteeism of the students

It should be noted that the number of OVSs that received school fees from CBOs dwindled from six each year, three years ago, to one per year by the time I was doing my research. The CBOs explained that this was due to the fact that the fees prices were increased and they were not able to raise enough funds to cater for more students unlike at first when they had just started. They said the country's economy was not good hence most small businesses were not successful. They attributed this to international funders' withholding of foreign assistance to Malawi due to the country's poor governance.

What is important to note here is that if the school / community does not have access to external funders, there are very few resources available with which to support these orphan and vulnerable students at either school / community. The situation is worsened if they do not receive sufficient support from their families. The quantitative research survey that I conducted revealed that 50% of the sampled OVSs received some external support in form of school fees. However, out of the 50% very few percentages received other types of support as can be seen from Table 8 below. Most of the OVS's fees, school uniform, and school and learning materials support came from the NGOs while food and money was mostly received either from the aunts, uncles, brothers or sisters. However, when the respondents were asked to rank the support that they needed most, almost all of them ranked school fees and money as number one followed by food, then school uniform and learning materials.

Table 8: No of OVSs that received external support at Londola and Mabuti CDSSs

Type of external support received by OVSs	Who provided the support	No of OVSs received the support out of 64	Percentage of the sampled OVSs (64) %
School fees	GoM CBOs NGO Aunt/Uncle/Brother/Sister Other (Well-wishers)***	9 3 12 6 2	14.0 4.7 18.8 9.4 3.1
Total		**32**	**50**
School uniform	NGO Aunt/Uncle/Brother/Sister	12 8	18.8 12.5
Total		**20**	**31.3**
Clothes	Aunt/Uncle/Brother/Sister	10	15.6
School learning materials (exercise note books, pens, text books etc.)	NGO Aunt/Uncle/Brother/Sister Well wishers	12 6 2	18.8 9.4 3.1
Total		**20**	**31.3**
Food	NGO Aunt/Uncle/Brother/Sister	Nil 10	Nil 15.6
Total		**4**	**15.6**
Money	NGO Aunt/Uncle/Brother/Sister Well wishers	6 15 2	9.4 23.4 3.1
Total		**23**	**35.9**

Note: * ** Well-wishers include the researchers. Also there were some OVSs that received more than three different types of support even though these were very few.

This signifies that, although the base of community participation and support for the two Community Day Secondary Schools where I conducted the research was quite different, the base of support for OVSs to attend these CDSSs was in both cases very narrow. Community participation for the CDSS might be mobilized in the name of the

future possibility for one's family to directly benefit from the school, as occurred in Mabuti, but even in such cases, support for OVSs to attend school did not expand concomitantly.

In order to have a good understanding on how community participation / support does affect or not affect the education of the OVCs, it is important to look at the OVCs daily lives at home and as they move through to school. The following section depicts the daily lives of four orphans and vulnerable students from the two research sites.

The daily lives of orphans and vulnerable students

Interpretivist approaches to understanding community participation and the education of OVSs is critical in this study. There is a disconnection in the current predominant hyper-participation theories of community and community participation from OVSs' daily lives and from a material understanding of the communities in which they live. These theories are also disconnected from theories of power, which critical theory centers on and which are essential to understanding OVSs' experiences and outcomes and understanding the consequences of international development efforts to support their education (Cornish & Ghosh, 2007).

In order to understand community participation from this conceptual framework, I spent a lot of time watching how communities function and talking to individual orphaned students about their experiences in the community and school. I also had group discussions with parents, students, SMCs and village heads in order to gain insights into OVSs lives. In these interactions, I attempted to listen carefully to how people constructed their understandings of orphanhood, vulnerability, schooling, and

community. At the same time, I wanted to deeply understand the systemic and institutional structures shaping this sense-making. It was important in my research to understand place and material resources and their linkages to "community," and how these linkages shaped the possibilities for participation in supporting OVSs.

Given this set of theoretical considerations, the structure of my study of the daily lives of OVSs reflects critical and interpretivist perspectives. I aim at capturing OVSs experiences and sense-making, and at the same time understanding relations of power and how they shape these students' lives and education. In order to provide the reader with a sense of these students' lives, I present vignettes about diverse OVSs' experiences at "home" and at school, and in the spaces in between. The vignettes below depict the confluence of material survival, belongingness, feeling loved, OVCs' dreams about their future, the daily grinds, and the familial and social networks that are playing key roles in OVSs continued persistent and attainment in their secondary school education. This in turn will provide a picture of how communities participate or not participate in the education of OVCs.

The vignettes

Londola: Bukisa Njinga

Bukisa Njinga, aged 18, is the fourth-born child in a family of five children. She lost her mother when she was in Standard 4. Being a matrilineal society, her father was thus asked to go back to his home village which was about 8 miles away, leaving behind five children, including Bukisa who was the fourth born in the family. By losing a mother, the matrilineal system in essence ended up making the five children dual

orphans even when the father was still alive. But in the case of Bukisa, her father unfortunately also passed away when she was in Form 2.

She is one of the few orphaned students who is achieving relatively good grades in the Form 4 class at Londola CDSS. During the first term of her fourth year, she was in 3rd position out of 19 students enrolled in Form 4. The teachers call her an exception and regard her as a role model. They always give her as a good example in terms of behavior and achievement in class. When I asked them during a focus group discussion in the staff room what they thought made Bukisa behave well and achieve highly in class, they answered [paraphrased]:

> Bukisa is born intelligent and works hard in class. She is rarely absent from school. She is a girl that knows what she wants in life! She does not flirt with boys like most of the girls from this area do. Most of the times, if ever she happens to walk around, it is when she is going to church. This girl we believe will pass this year's Form 4 Malawi School Certificate of Education examinations [when I checked on her later on indeed she had passed her exams]. Determination. Yes it is her determination that makes her do well and have this good behavior! (July, 2012)

Teachers' perceptions of what drove Bukisa's behavior are notable in two ways: First, they are entirely focused on Bukisa and her personal behavior, thus eluding any analysis of the structural factors working for or against her success. Second, they were focused on her (proper) behavior with boys, not indulging herself in sexual relations with boys. This focus was very common in teachers' discussions about whether a female

student was "good" or "bad", but concerns about their behaviors with girls rarely factored in to their discussions about male students.[9]

Through my research, I found there was more to Bukisa's life that contributed to her behavior and success. At that time when her mother was passing away, Bukisa was only 12 years old, while her oldest sibling was a boy aged 19, who was completing his secondary school education at Londola CDSS. The second and third born were girls aged 17 and 15 years, respectively and the last born sibling was a boy aged 10.

Bukisa tells me that the first sibling left the village for town to search for employment soon after completing his secondary education, even though he did not pass the Form 4 MSCE examinations very well. Without a good pass, he was unlikely to be able to find formal employment opportunities. By the time I was doing my research, the brother was working in town and had married someone from a village that is situated about 20 miles away from his home village. He does not often come home to see his sisters but instead visits his wife's home and wife's siblings whom he helps. The other two sisters of Bukisa live in the village. They did not go far with education and got married when they had reached standard 8. The young brother to Bukisa is in Form 2 at a National Secondary School.

Bukisa is living with her grandmother, who is in her late sixties. Culturally, she would be expected to be living with her uncle since the demise of her mother. Bukisa told me that as soon as her mother passed away, all the five children's responsibility was left in the hands of the grandmother. She was occasionally assisted by her deceased

[9] All of the discussions about sexual relationships assumed heterosexual relationships.

mother's two sisters, who were also living in the village. One was with her husband but the other was divorced. These two sisters of the deceased had their own children too, five and four respectively, and Bukisa told me that the two sisters to her late mother did not have enough resources to help the children of their deceased sister.

Bukisa narrates that when her mother passed away, her sisters, who were at school at that time, started assuming the role of their deceased mother by cultivating the land that belonged to their mother and fetching firewood, water, food, and other materials in order for the family to eat. She said they would come from school and engage in the household chores and at times engage in piece work to find money for soap and other needs. Their father, who had to leave the place due to cultural traditions (a man is expected to go to his place of birth so that he can get married again after the death of his wife), used to visit them once in a while and brought to them clothes and some funds. He also gave them some advice and encouraged them to continue with school but this too came to an end when he passed away. Bukisa's elder siblings found household chores so demanding and could not cope with this life and decided to drop out of school and get married. However, the married life had its own challenges as narrated by Bukisa later on.

The observations and interviews I had with Bukisa revealed that Bukisa's success and resilience to continue with education was due to a number of reasons. Every day Bukisa wakes up around 4:00 am in the morning. She kindles fire and puts a pot of water on the fire for her to bathe. She then takes a lamp and starts reading. She does this for one hour every morning. At half past 5, she sweeps the surrounding, after which she goes to take a bath and her grandmother helps her in cooking porridge. Soon after

bathing, she quickly eats porridge and dresses up in her old uniform, whose white blouse has some holes at the back. She puts on her torn plastic shoes and collects her notebooks to go to school. The grandmother, a devout Christian, always makes sure that they recite a prayer in the morning and that she gives Bukisa some advice, for example, make sure you come home straight after school, do not linger around with men, work hard in school, etc., before she heads out of the door. Bukisa takes off for her 45 minute journey to the CDSS and as soon as she leaves the home and joins the road to school, she is joined by a fellow Form 4 girl who comes from the same village. They walk, at times almost running, to school together, while sometimes talking about the assignments that the teacher had given them the previous day.

Bukisa seems to be full of life and when she and her friends arrive at school, they go straight to sweeping the classroom. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday, she afterwards joins fellow students at the assembly around 7:30 am. One would rarely hear Bukisa talking at the assembly, but she does smile once in a while when a teacher or a fellow student makes some interesting remarks or jokes. Most often the head teacher talks about the need for the students to work hard in class, be disciplined and respect the teachers, and study at school as well as at home as depicted in the excerpt below:

> Let me tell you, behind every success is hard work! Work hard! Some of you are too playful and make a lot of noise in class. That is preparing to fail! We have some books in the library there. Very few students have come forward to borrow books. Make an effort to get some of those books and read. In our time, we used to read and that is why we are where we are today. Without education, you will rot in the villages! Secondly let me warn some of you who are not disciplined.

> You behave badly. You will not go anywhere with that type of behavior. You do not respect teachers, and you walk around with your shirts not tucked in! Some of you, I hear have boy /girl relationships here. That will not help you. You know the rules but deliberately you decide to break them. Why don't you take the example of Bukisa Njinga? [Some students laugh while Bukisa looks down and smiles]. We are already educated and we just watch you. You will cry over spilt milk one of these days! Thirdly, let me inform you that the government has approved and paid school fees bursaries for some of you orphaned students whose names we had submitted. The names of the students whose fees have been paid for include: Bukisa Njinga, (he mentions nine other names) (June, 2012)

The head teacher's address at the assembly encouraged Bukisa as she was mentioned and recognized as a role model. She was motivated to work hard and continue to be exemplary in her behavior. However, she later informed me that she felt quite uncomfortable when the head teacher publicly called out names of the students he called as orphans. She said it reminded her that she had no parents which made her sad for it was a thing she could not change.

I had the opportunity to observe some lessons in Form 4, where Bukisa is learning. Bukisa sits with a fellow girl at one of the desks placed about two rows from the teacher's desk. She has a number of textbooks and notebooks at her desk. When a teacher walks in, all the students stand up and the teacher greets them and they all answer in a chorus before they sit down. During a Geography lesson, Bukisa and her friend listen attentively and take notes as the teacher teaches. The teacher occasionally asks questions, which some students attempt to answer after raising their hands. Bukisa

does not raise her hand but the teacher calls out her name. Twice she is called out and on both occasion she gets the correct answer. After teaching for one period, the teacher asks one student to write the notes on the board while the rest of the students copy the notes. The teacher walks out of the classroom while this is occurring. Some students make noise while copying notes but Bukisa silently copies notes. At one time a male student comes at her desk and wants to sit next to her. She pushes him away and tells him that if he continues to want to sit at her desk, she will inform the teacher. The boy leaves while the other students boo at him.

Another teacher comes in to teach Mathematics. He gives a few examples on the board and asks a few students to come forward to solve a few mathematical problems. One of the students requested to solve a problem on the board is Bukisa. She goes in front and as she solves the problem she asks questions to her fellow students while in the process explaining the methodology she is utilizing. Everybody, including the teacher, claps hands for her at the end for getting the math right. The teacher then splits the students into groups and assigns a number of mathematical problems to them to solve. Bukisa's group is made of four students who decide to sit outside the classroom. Bukisa is quiet as others try to solve the math problems but occasionally interjects when she sees that a wrong calculation is about to be made. Everybody in her group seems to listen to her. She somehow commands respect. After the allotted time, all the five groups come back into the classroom, where the teacher asks each group to explain how they solved the questions that were given to them. Bukisa stands up to explain how her group solved the mathematical questions that were given to them.

During break time, Bukisa and two other girls sit behind the classroom and share some sugarcane. They also shared some experiences they had during a football/ netball match their school had with another neighboring CDSS. I later learnt that one of the two girls Bukisa was chatting with was a teacher's daughter while the other one was someone who did not have parents – they both had passed away.

After school at 3:30 pm, Bukisa carries her books in a plastic bag and heads home with the same friend that she had come with in the morning. She arrives home and immediately her grandmother asks her to go to the maize mill to grind maize. The maize mill is about one hour's walk from her home. She puts her books in the house and carries the basket of maize on her head to the maize mill. She returns home and finds that her grandmother has cooked vegetables for relish[10] and asks her to use some of the very maize flour she had brought to cook food (nsima). In the evening after eating, Bukisa uses the lamp to study for two hours before she goes to bed. She reads some of the books that she borrowed from the school library and some notes that her brother had used when he was in Form 4. However, she told me that at times the two hours for study are interrupted by her grandmother who calls and gives her a lecture on the importance of education and provides examples of those children who had excelled in school and are now employed, bought vehicles etc. but did not have parents, just like her.

Bukisa's daily life is quite difficult, with few additional resources for luxuries like new shoes or a uniform, her life would be made easier. The family does not usually

[10] [10] Relish is the term used in Malawi to describe whatever food accompanies *nsima*, the staple meal. For OVSs, relish is usually greens, cooked with some onion and tomato and salt, and with some oil if this can be afforded. It also includes beans, eggs, fish, and meat, though these are less commonly eaten on a daily basis in the poorest households.

have meat or eggs, but usually beans and greens. Despite these hardships, Bukisa has a number of structures that support her success. First, her grandmother is extremely dedicated to her education, and provides Bukisa with love, support, and resources for school. Second, Bukisa's own resolve, which is fueled by her religious beliefs and her grandmother's presence, has resulted in Bukisa avoiding sexual relationships and even flirtations at school. Because she is recognized as a very good and serious student at the school by her teachers and her fellow students, and because education is seen as a way for the very brightest to succeed, Bukisa seemed to be supported by the school community in succeeding at school.

Bukisa's wellbeing also depended on some aspects of chance. For example, in Londola and throughout Malawi, sexual violence is not unusual, but Bukisa so far appeared to have escaped this fate because another girl from her village was also selected to secondary school and could walk back and forth with her every day. Similarly, Bukisa's grandmother had a large enough piece of land that even after her sisters received land to farm, Bukisa and her grandmother could still find some food from their land for part of each year. These additional forms of support and resources made a big difference in Bukisa's success at staying in school and achieving highly.

Londola: Ganizani Chikopa

Ganizani Chikopa is a Form 3 student and 17 years old. He comes from Kathaulokolimba village about two miles away from Londola CDSS. Ganizani and his elder brother, aged 27, were born to Mr. and Mrs. Chikopa, both devout Muslims, who unfortunately passed away in the same year when Ganizani was only 9 years old. His brother was at that time in Form 2, but he says he dropped out of school due to lack of

school fees. His father was an Agriculture Extension officer. Soon after the father passed away, Ganizani and his brother came to the village to stay with their maternal aunt, who is the younger sister of their mother. Ganizani narrates that life in his aunt's home was quite easy as she encouraged him to go to school and provided most of the necessities he required including soap, sugar, food, clothes, and shoes, since she used to do business of selling produce and second hand clothes.

This positive situation continued until the aunt got married and went to live with her husband in town. When this happened, Ganizani's life took another deep dive as he shifted and went to live in his maternal grandmother's house. He lived here until he reached 15 years of age. During this time, his grandmother often could not provide basic necessities. Most of the necessities got scarce. At 15, Ganizani's older brother helped him to construct a small house of his own. Ganizani explains that when his aunt left the village, it was the grandmother's husband (who is a tailor) and his brother that provided for his needs, even though this was not enough and much less when compared to what his aunt used to provide. Ganizani learnt to fend for himself, largely by engaging in piece work (*ganyu* labor), including cultivating in some people's gardens. Besides *ganyu*, Ganizani also worked in his grandmother's garden to support her, as she was elderly enough that she could no longer farm.

Ganizani works very hard at school and his behavior was so exemplary that by the time I was conducting my research, he had been elected head prefect for the school. Like most of the orphaned male students I chatted with and visited from this area, during the rainy season, Ganizani wakes up early in the morning, around 4:30 am, and goes to cultivate in the grandmother's garden (I was made to understand that part of this garden

had belonged to his mother but since he is a man, they could not give it to him as they expect him to go away from the village after getting married). He farms up to around 5:30am. When he comes back from the garden he finds water is already heated by his grandmother or some of his female cousins for him to bathe. Whenever available, he is then given porridge to eat and then he goes to school. The time I was there, I rarely heard his grandmother or anybody else advising him to work hard in school except his brother, who occasionally came from where he is married to give him some clothes, soap and notebooks. The brother's advice centered on the fact that what he was investing in should pay a dividend, as I reconstructed from my field notes on the conversation between Ganizani and his brother:

> My brother, I have brought some soap, notebooks and writing materials as you had requested. Things are not okay these days [He is talking about the economic situation which had gone worse due to the devaluation of the Kwacha currency]. I went to the lake to try to buy some fish so that I can sell here in the village …aaaah! It is too expensive and I just came back. I have just bought some maize which I am selling at home. You see the Local Public Works that we [community work] did …that of constructing the road to the health clinic, the government has not yet paid us. Brother, things are not okay. You just have to work hard in school so that you do not land yourself in the problems we are facing. Our friends who went on with education are now employed and are better off for at least they get something at the end of every month. Use this prudently! (August, 2012).

As a head prefect, most often Ganizani arrives at school before anybody else. He stands in a position where he is able to see every student walking into the school compound. His friends wave at him as they arrive while some mock him by asking him whether he slept at the school. In return Ganizani waves at them or smiles or laughs it off. He makes sure that every student is punctual and the school compound is clean. He assigns the students to various tasks when they arrive at the school. I notice some girls and boys are often late in arriving at school – a number of them are orphans or vulnerable students. When I ask Ganizani about these students, he tells me that most of those arriving late are walking more than 11 kilometers to get to the CDSS. However, he still records their names as late arrivals and tells them to remain behind after the day's classes for punishment. This is a typical example of how the school uses the rule of "one size fits all" when dealing with students and not looking at individual cases so that they deal with them equitably. This in the process affects the OVCs more as they are faced with various difficult situations.

After school, Ganizani returns home to eat, usually finding food prepared by his grandmother or female relatives. Sometimes he then goes to another person's garden to cultivate some piece of land and get some money for food for himself and his grandmother, or for items like soap, salt, and oil. Each night, he tries to study, but many times there is no lamp or candle that he can use. When this is the case, he sleeps earlier. Ganizani is very driven to do well at school, and he says he is very worried that he cannot study enough because of the problems of food and school fees and basic necessities. He does piece work during all of the school breaks to earn money for his fees, and so he can only do extra studies on the weekends after farming.

As in Bukisa's case, there are a number of support structures that seem to be central to Ganizani's success in school. Like Bakusa, he has a small group of people who regularly provide him emotional and physical support and encourage him in school. Ganizani also seems to be very strongly motivated by his own success in school, which leads him, like Bakusa, to believe that he can pass well on the Form 4 exams and therefore have a different life in future. Also like Bakusa, Ganizani has care responsibilities for elderly family members, though Ganizani's caregiving is greater than Bakusa's because his grandmother is in poor health and cannot help with the farming. However, if Ganizani was not farming for his grandmother, he would not have access to land in the area.

Unlike Bakusa, Ganizani is able to raise more funds for school fees and basic necessities because he can do higher-paying piece works usually set aside for men, and his female relatives do more of the domestic chores like cooking and collecting firewood and water and so he has more time for piecework. Though I did not hear about Ganizani being involved in any sexual relationships, because he is a man, even were he to impregnate a girl, he would likely still be able to continue at school, and he expressed no concerns about the need to avoid violence in the community or at school.

Mabuti: Kenisala

Kenisala is a 13 year old Form 1 student born into a family of two. She lost her father when she was only 5 years old. From then on, she was living with her mother, who passed away in October 2012 when she was twelve years old, soon after the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination results were released. Kenisala explained that she can divide her life into three parts. Firstly, she talks of the life she

used to live when both her parents were alive. She says life was very comfortable when her father, a Form 2 dropout, was alive. The father and mother had a big garden and they used to grow crops like maize, groundnuts, sugarcane, sweet potatoes, and cotton. They used to sell some of the proceeds from the field, and they had managed to build an iron roofed house with baked bricks. She remembers that daily she was able to have breakfast--a cup of tea and some sweet potatoes and at times a piece of bread. She started standard 1 when she was 5 years old. Whenever she came home from school she could find her mother had cooked food for her and her father used to ask her how she fared in class. She felt very cared for.

Fate had it that her father passed away when she was still in standard 1. Because *lobola*, [dowry payment being practiced in the patrilineal marriage system] was paid for her mother and that there was no close relative at the village compound that could take care of the house and the other resources the family had, she was allowed to stay at her husband's village and inherited the house and land that belonged to her husband. The mother, also being a Form 2 drop out, knew the benefit of educating her children. She managed to pay school fees for her first born daughter up to Form 2. After reaching Form 2 the mother failed to pay school fees for the second term and hence Kenisala's older sister dropped out. However, Kenisala passionately narrates the life experiences she went through during the period she lived with her mother. She explained that since standard 1 she used to pass either position 1or 2 in school at the end of each term. She said her mother provided the notebooks, pens, school uniform, and food to her before going to school and after coming from school. When she had reached standard 5 her

mother made sure that she spent one hour to study in the morning as well as in the evening and provided paraffin (kerosene) to put in the lamp. Kenisala narrated:

> My mother used to tell me, my daughter you should work hard in school so that you should have a bright future. These days those who have gone further with education are the ones that are prospering in life. Look at Janet Kumwenda from that village [she was pointing to a village that was next to us], she is a nurse at Rumphi Hospital because she went on with her education. (December, 2012)

Kenisala stated that her mother provided to her anything that she needed at school. Her mother managed to get her funds from selling sugarcane, maize, and sweet potatoes that she grew. She said she had fond memories of her mother bringing home some shoes and second-hand clothes from the market where she used to sell the crop produce. Kenisala said that throughout her primary school she passed either position 1 or 2 and no wonder she did well during the standard 8 Primary School Leaving Certificate and was selected to go to a CDSS. However, she feels that she could have been selected to go to a National Secondary School had it not been for the frequent illness of her mother when she was in standard 8. This frequent illness led to her demise after battling with pneumonia at Rumphi district hospital (which is situated 30 miles from her home). She recalls the times she had to cook food for herself, fetch water and fire wood, and at the same time attend school when her mother was at the hospital. At times she missed classes to go to the maize mill. She says that this contributed to her dismal performance during standard 8 examinations.

After the demise of her mother, Kenisala saw the world collapse on her. The distant relatives from her clan decided that she was too young to live in the house that

her father and mother had constructed (her sister was married and was away at her husband's home). They saw that she was too young to cultivate the land that her parents were cultivating, too young to sell sugarcane that her parents had grown, too young to be independent, and too young to be married. But, typical of other orphans that I spoke with in the Mzimba- Mabuti area, Kenisala was moved from one relative to another after the distant relatives determined that she could not stay alone. There was no elderly close relative that was staying near their home. She thus moved away and some distant relations from her clan came to manage the home and the land of the deceased who later on claimed ownership to the land. In the process, she lost the right to her father's land and home, and to her own physical and emotional security. Firstly, she went to stay with the two sisters of her late father who are married and stay at Mkombezi and Ng'onga. She says that she had lived very well with them, but the distance to the CDSS was quite prohibitive for her to stay. It was finally decided by members of her father's clan to move her to her sister's place-Mabuti, where the CDSS was about one and half kilometers away. Her sister is married and stays at this place.

During the research the female research assistant interviewed and observed Kenisala during a typical day, which very much resembles the days of most of the female OVSs in the area with whom we interacted. Kenisala wakes up around 4.00 am in the morning to make fire and boil some water for the children of her sister, the husband of her sister, and two boys who are children of the father of her brother in-law and go to the primary school which is just adjacent to the CDSS that she attends. She then takes a broom to sweep the surrounding while the water heats up. After it is dawn and one can see clearly, Kenisala takes a pail to draw water from a borehole, which is

about a kilometer away. Sometimes she finds some elderly women at the borehole and she has to wait for her turn. Sometimes she finds her friends and chats a bit with them. After drawing water, she goes back to her home. She wakes up the young boys so that they could go and bathe while she washes dishes that were used the previous evening during supper. Kenisala then goes to bathe, sometimes in cold water due to lack of firewood to heat up the water. By this time, it is already seven o'clock and she quickly rushes to dress herself. She does not have the required uniform for the CDSS so she decides to pick up the only dress that she has that does not have holes. She picks up her books and bids farewell to her sister and starts off and joins her friends along the way. Kenisala arrives around 7:20 am at school and sweeps the surrounding together with her friends. This being Monday, at 7:30 am they all go to school assembly. As we observed, Kenisala walked close to four girls whom we learnt later were her friends whose names were Erita Njala (Form 1), Ester Nyemba (Form 1), Kwaniskani Hango (Form 1) and Ndekha Nkhumbala (Form 2). During break time and time for sports, we always saw her with these very girls. When she was asked why she was always found with these girls she said: "These girls love me and they usually share with me what they have carried from their homes, especially food like green maize, sweet potatoes, cassava. At times they also give me writing materials like pens when I do not have anything."

During the assembly the head teacher announces that from the coming week, each child should come to school wearing school uniform - a white blouse, green skirt and black shoes for girls. He explains that this is what members of Parents Teachers Association (PTA) had agreed upon and everybody must make sure that this rule is adhered to. Kenisala looks down as the head teacher explains further that those not

wearing the school uniform were going to be sent back. I could see that she was in deep thoughts, disturbed. Later on, during the discussions I had with her, she explained that she wondered how she was going to get the uniform that was costing K1,800.00 when the family she was staying with could hardly ever produce enough food and find money for breakfast. The head teacher also asked the students to work hard in school so that they excel in life.

After the assembly the students went into their respective classes. During English and Mathematics, subjects that were taught before break-time, I saw Kenisala and her friends actively responding to questions that were asked by their teachers. Kenisala always raised her hand to answer questions and asked questions when she did not understand what the teacher was teaching. Most times when the teacher asked questions, she did get the answers right. During break time, Kenisala went with her friends to a place behind the classroom where they shared green maize and some bananas amongst themselves. They chatted and laughed as they ate the snacks until the bell rung. After break time, Kenisala went into the classroom but their class teacher was not around. She had gone to meet the District Education Manager. The class prefect informed the class that they were given notes that they were to copy on the chalk board.

After 12:00 pm, the history teacher came into class. Kenisala was resting her head on the desk when the teacher was walking into the classroom. The teacher shouted at Kenisala:

> "You! Why are you sleeping in class? Did you not have enough sleep last night? Sleeping in class shows you are lazy! Wake up!"

Slowly Kenisala lifted up her head and looked more perturbed. However, when the teacher started teaching, she actively participated in class. I was puzzled by this turn of events. After classes at 1:40 pm, I asked Kenisala what was the problem. She answered me that she was feeling hungry and that was the reason she had rested her head on the desk, but she said she had decided to work hard in class because she believed that most of the problems she was facing could easily be sorted out if she got educated. After school, she left the classes and went straight to her home. The research assistant, Ms. Mhone, accompanied Kenisala and her two friends to their homes and on the way Ms. Mhone bought some scones and drinks for them, which they greatly appreciated. The research assistant decided to go to Kenisala's home to chat with her and help her in her household chores. After arriving home, they had to go to the *dimba* garden to fetch some vegetables for relish. They came back and cooked the vegetables and nsima. Kenisala then had her lunch around 3.00 p.m. After eating she went ahead to clean the plates and do other household chores like drawing water and fetching firewood, in which Ms. Mhone joined. Kenisala assumed the role of a mother when her young relatives returned home from playing and by 6:30pm, she was so exhausted but still asked her sister for paraffin in order for her to read and do some homework. Ms. Mhone then left for the day, and Kenisala informed us the next day that she did her studies for one and half hours during that evening.

Kenisala's life story reflects many of the same issues visible in the previous two vignettes. The girl orphans with whom I spoke and whom I observed were more likely to have very full domestic duties to perform before and after school, although male orphans also had more duties than their friends. These duties usually gave them very little time to

study, and when they had time to study after all the chores, they were very tired. Also, as with all of the orphans from these vignettes and most of the orphans with whom I spoke, Kenisala had very little to eat each day, and walked very long distances and performed heavy labor before and after school. Of course this impacted her studies at school, but as with the case of her teacher and with Ganizani, the school did not acknowledge or respond to these difficulties faced by most orphans. This same issue occurred with the head teacher's and PTA's decision to require uniforms, as they did not appear to understand the effect this would have on the poorest students like Kenisala. They are unaware of the predicament that the OVSs find themselves in with the decisions that are made.

Unlike the previous two vignettes, but like the majority of the orphans with whom I spoke, Kenisala was a good, but not an excellent, student. She was struggling to keep up with her studies and struggling to maintain the material support she needed to succeed at school. She did not get a lot of active encouragement to pursue her studies, though no one in Mabuti (unlike in Londola) discouraged her from school. Like many orphans who have persevered in school, Kenisala had a small group of friends who supported her emotionally and by sharing the resources that they had. This made a huge difference for her, as she knew that they would support her at school and at working hard to continue school no matter the difficulties she was facing.

Lastly, these friends and a small circle of relatives were the key emotional support that Kenisala had in her life. As with most OVSs, Kenisala's life when young had been much more secure emotionally and in terms of resources. Over time, while she remains viewed as a child by her extended family, first because of her age and then

because she is at school, she loses the forms of support which young children with both parents usually receive. Unless she decides to get married and move to live with her husband, she cannot easily access the resources that adult women with children can sometimes access. As we lived in the area during research period we bought some shoes, clothes and food for Kenisala and also promised to do so as long as she continued with school.

Mabuti: Mwiza Mwango

At school, I met a boy who is known as Mwiza Mwango, while his sister is called Lusizi Nkhambule. I was puzzled by this phenomenon, especially because when I went to their home both of them were called Mwangos. Mwiza is 17 years old and in Form 2 at Mabuti CDSS. He and his sister Lusizi stay with their maternal grandfather and grandmother. Mwiza's father passed away in 2001 when he was only 6 years old and after only three years, his mother also passed away. Mwiza narrates that there are only two siblings in his family and that soon after the death of the father, his mother left his father's home to come and reside at her mother's home, but left his sister with her husband's brother. Mwiza's sister who was older, was already staying with his father's brother by the time his father was dying where she had started school. His mother was allowed to leave her deceased husband's home by the late husband's relatives since there was no one from the deceased husband's kindred that wanted to marry her.

Soon after arriving in the village Mwiza was enrolled in a nearby primary school. He said it was the grandfather that took him to the primary school for enrolment and registered him as Mwiza Mwango. Two years later, his sister joined him but since she had already started schooling where she was, she brought a school transfer certificate

that bore her name as Lusizi Nkhambule. She still uses this name at school because of difficulties in changing her name in the school system, but she is known as Lusizi Mwango in the village. Some people in the village never knew she had a different name at school. It was very difficult to locate her home when I asked the people from the village using the name she had used to enroll at school. During informal interviews I had with the grandfather one day he unveiled the mystery about the names of the two grandchildren:

> You see, Mwiza and Lusizi are bearing my surname because I do not want them to be reminded of the death of their father. It is unfortunate that Lusizi is called Nkhambule …it is because the one who went with her to school when she came from Monkey-Bay did not inform the head teacher to change her name to Lusizi Mwango. I also discovered that she was called Lusizi Nkhambule when I read her school report. You also know that if someone does not pay l*obola* then the children do not belong to him. Late Nkhambule had not yet paid *lobola* hence these children are Mwangos unless the Nkhambule clan comes to redeem them[11]. (December, 2012)

Everyday Mwiza walks four miles to Mabuti CDSS but narrates that before he leaves for school he does some household chores with his sister. He and his sister normally wake up at around 4:30 am. They help each other in drawing water, sweeping the surroundings, and cooking some porridge. Mwiza puts on a school uniform and

[11] "Redeeming" the children refers to the father's family coming and paying in full the *lobola* that was owed to the wife's family for her marriage. Unless the *lobola* is paid in full, the children are not transferred to the patriliny.

wears a pair of worn-out shoes. The shoes were purchased by his aunt (a sister to his deceased mother that works in Mzuzu city, 40 miles away from Mabuti).

Mwiza starts off for school while carrying his notebooks in a plastic bag. He usually runs so that he is not late for classes and at times joins a group of students that are also heading in the same direction. Most times he walks and talks with Fumu Nyirenda, a fellow Form 2 student whom I later found out has a single parent (mother). Their conversation is mostly centered on home work that the teachers gave them or what each one was going to do after knocking off from school. Most times their plans center on working in their gardens, (it seems each one was given a 1.5 acres piece of land by their grandfather, and each boy grows crops like maize, groundnuts and soya beans), jointly doing some piece work in someone's garden, and meeting to study together.

Mwiza arrives at the school and seems to be very jovial as he jostles around with other male and female students while cleaning the classrooms and the school surrounding before the assembly bell rings, if it is Monday, or a bell rings to enter into the classes, if it is any other day from Tuesday to Friday. On Mondays, all the students rush to the assembly where they sing the National Anthem and then the head teacher makes some announcements and at times asks his deputy to give comments as well. The announcements usually hinge on the importance of being punctual to school; payment of school fees; students' behavior; school uniform; and working hard in class.

In class, Mwiza is a very active student. He always volunteers to answer questions that are asked by teachers. For example, during the Mathematics course, after the teacher has introduced the topic of "solving simultaneous equations", Mwiza goes in front of the class and involves the fellow students step by step in solving a simultaneous

equation problem that is in the Mathematics exercise book. To the amazement of the whole class and the teacher, Mwiza utilizes several methods in solving a given Mathematics problem and does it so well that his fellow students call him "local genius."

During the time I attended classes, every teacher recognized Mwiza and requested him to come in front of the class and give examples and help his friends in answering some questions that they had set up or those that were in the exercise books. Most times when the students are sent out to do group work, Mwiza's group emerges to be the first in completing the tasks. One day I asked him the secret behind his brilliant performance in class and he said:

> I read some books and notes that our aunt left at home. She used to learn at Ekwendeni Girls Secondary School [this is one of the highly respected National Secondary Schools in Malawi]. When teachers are absent I spend that time reading and when we knock-off from school, whenever there is no work, I collect some friends and go out to the bush to study until late in the evening. At times I have to work in the garden and when such happens I wake up in the night to study. You know they say there is no sweet without sweat! Nowadays in order to have a good life someone has to be educated. There are many young men who are not educated, they just went up to Form 4, and they are loitering in the village drinking beer! (November, 2012)

Mwiza has never gone to the original home of his deceased father, even though once in a while he and Lusizi are visited by the brother of their deceased father. This uncle stays in Mzuzu and does some piece work. Mwiza says the uncle rarely sends them anything to help them in their day to day living. Mwiza recalls that when the uncle

had visited them he had asked them to pay him a visit in Mzuzu and also make an effort to visit their home in Monkey Bay. When I asked him where he was planning to settle down in future, Mwiza said:

> If I get educated, I will buy a piece of land and construct my house in town where I will live. The land I am cultivating now belongs to my grandfather. His children might get it away from me whenever, God forbid, he passes away. I have not been to the original home of my deceased father but I am sure all the land that belonged to my father must have been taken by my relatives including his brothers. People around my home area like growing tobacco these days hence need larger pieces of land. (November, 2012)

Mwiza's situation seems to be a common feature amongst many male orphan students in this area who live at their mother's birth land. They do not have pieces of land, as much as the traditional patrilineal system is believed to be providing opportunities for the children to inherit the land of their deceased parents (Moleni, 2008). They lose the land through many ways, including by not visiting their father's home area often enough (if they were moved to their mother's home). This challenge is not only true for the orphaned children but also for those children that have become vulnerable due to marriage breakdown. This is now common in both matrilineal and patrilineal marriage systems and has led to many orphaned and vulnerable students living a very nomadic life. This was narrated by Yohane Yanika, a Form 3 student at Mabuti CDSS:

> You see, I used to live with my father and mother in Livingstonia which is in Rumphi district. When my father died, the relatives of my father allowed my

> mother to come home here…so then the brother to my mother who lives in Mzuzu decided to take me so that I could stay with them. Then I used to learn there. I was in Standard 4. When I reached Standard 7 my mother asked his brother, who is my uncle, to send me home so that I can be helping her in farming. So I came here and enrolled in Standard 8 and fortunately passed and was selected to go Mabuti CDSS. (November, 2012)

Mwiza's vignette highlights that these forms of movement matter a great deal in OVCs' lives. The moves are dependent usually on many different factors, one of which may be the child's schooling but most of which relate to the needs or shortages faced by various relatives. These moves result in most orphans talking about the ups and downs of their lives as they are moved from one relative to another. The OVCs usually do not have any control over these movements, and in many cases, the movements result in the child's material support base growing smaller and smaller. In essence, due to such movements, the community supporting the OVCs is thus not static while at the same time shrinking. Another point visible across all four vignettes is that for those orphans who are continuing with education at CDSS, usually their relatives are sacrificing a lot in order for the OVSs to remain in school. The CDSSs that they attend have very few resources to support their education. For various reasons, teachers are often absent, there are very few teaching and learning materials at the school, there is no electricity to support their night studies, and some of the essential topics are never discussed at the school (especially sciences). The community that is supporting the OVSs in their education has very limited resources and at times is not aware of some of the difficulties that are faced by the OVSs. It is noted that the OVSs and their relatives support their

education with hopes for a better future, but in these schools, all their hard work seldom receives support or great rewards.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that CDSSs are established through various ways, as much as they are supposed to be initiated and established through community participation as their name implies. This has significant consequences on how the schools are run and how supportive these CDSSs are towards the education of OVSs. Where the church / religious organizations are involved in the establishment of a CDSS, if deliberate efforts are not taken care of to ensure equity, community support towards education shrinks and in the process does affect the OVSs. The education policies developed need to take into account changes in community that may occur after the CDSSs are established. These dynamics undermining support from the school for OVSs are compounded by the current change in power dynamics in and around the secondary schools, families, and the villages from where these students come.

The composition of the community members has a bearing on how people participate in supporting the CDSS as well as the OVSs. Different people from different origins / backgrounds are not as knitted together as before, as it has been voiced by various researchers in Malawi and the region (Devereaux, 1999; Kendall, 2007). The situation is further exacerbated by the economic pressures that many people are facing today. More research needs to be carried out to establish how economics have affected the dynamics of people working collectively together for the good of the cause. The unwritten law of reciprocity that hinges on the concept that "next time it might be me"

seems to be playing a significant role in some of the endeavors that community members engage in collectively, but it has waned in others, especially those that aim at supporting children. For example, the research established that members of the community worked collectively together during funerals, weddings, and initiation ceremonies. There is strong reciprocity at play as members fear that if they do not provide the support during such events, next time when their turn comes, they would not be supported. This is the driving force for unity.

This philosophy, however, was not applied when it came to supporting OVSs. The women said it might be because the members never thought of the orphaned student as someone that belonged to them all and also never thought that they could die and their children will be orphans, and hence the ones they supported would support their children. This has left the OVSs to either fend for themselves or has placed the full burden of care on the few people (often elderly grandmothers) with whom they are staying. A breakdown in the traditional / cultural ties of kinship is worsening the situation. However, at times this in turn has built a particular type of resilience in these students, leading to hard working in education with an aim of achieving self-sustenance and self-reliance in the future. This is a tenuous resilience in some ways, however, because the reduced material support base is not often able to absorb the shock due to the change in circumstances, such as the school requiring that the OVSs wear a uniform, and the few people providing emotional support to these children. If these few people providing the support die or move away, this often very seriously affects the mental and emotional state of the child. It is thus argued that programs aimed at supporting the OVSs that have community participation element need to be carefully crafted and not

hinge on the assumption that communities will provide the support as the community does not practice strong reciprocity in supporting OVSs. Defining who comprises the community and what are the needs, will go a long way in coming up with the right support towards the OVSs' education.

In this chapter I have also shown that OVSs often face challenges in their extended families and communities with being told or experiencing a lack of belonging. The members of the family whom they stay with try to deal with this challenge in a number of ways, including through providing resources like land to them and changing the identity (i.e. surnames) of the children in an effort to provide them a clear claim to belonging to a particular clan or family. This was true also for those children whose parents divorced. In the matrilineal society the children took the surname of their mothers since they were staying at their mother's home while in the patrilineal society the children took the surnames of either their stepfathers or grandfathers depending where they are living. Some relatives also visited OVSs and urged them to visit their relatives so that they are known in the areas where they can claim land and other forms of belonging. However, this was usually financially impossible for OVSs, and they often faced land grabbing by relatives, sometimes even in cases where they stayed right in the village with their relatives. Lack of belonging does have ä bearing on what "community" is available to support the OVSs and what type of support should be expected by the community to the OVSs.

Most of the OVSs stayed with their grandparents, who embraced them like their own children and provided the support they could afford. The research and national demographic data indicate, however, that these grandparent-headed households are often

deeply marginalized financially and sometimes also socially (Ainsworth & Filmer, 2006; NSO, 2010). At times the grandparents asked their own biological children to support these OVSs (who were often their own nieces and nephews). These family situations are shifting as the grandparent generation is now becoming very aged, and the OVSs may be responsible for sustaining and caring for these grandparents now. OVSs in this situation usually felt happy to provide for their grandparents who had cared for them so well, but these responsibilities are very heavy while are still going to school. In this scenario, the community that is supporting the OVSs is composed of the aged who also need support which is provided by the very OVSs. Critical individual OVS analysis is important in order to establish what type of support is being or can be provided by the "community" where the OVSs live.

In the same vein, the research findings have revealed that uncles are expected to play a significant role in supporting OVSs in their education, but such support is dependent on the uncles' geographical positioning to the OVSs, as well as their own economic well-being. Previously, uncle support would have played a more central role for many OVSs, but the shift in social practices toward focusing resources and "investment" in one's own children seems to have weakened these patterns.

Lastly, this chapter has also revealed some of the crucial factors that drive some OVSs to want to achieve in class and be educated. Lack of belonging or fear that soon they will not belong (for example, if a grandparent dies), dreams about their glistening future available only through schooling, the daily grinds that they meet, the social networks, the role models and financial and moral support provided, are some of the

driving forces. These are important areas that community participation programs need to consider when deciding the type of support that can be provided to the OVSs

In the final chapter, I will summarize the major arguments from each Chapter and also present areas that seem to be glossed over when scholars, government, non-governmental organizations, and development partners think about OVCs, community, participation, and schooling. This will be followed by theoretical contributions made by the dissertation as well as the general recommendations to various stakeholders and future research plans

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Introduction

This research study has utilized a critical interpretivist theoretical framework and ethnographic methods of enquiry to explore an array of stakeholders' perspectives on the meanings and understandings of community participation in OVSs' secondary schooling in Malawi. Critical interpretivist and ethnographic methods provided an opportunity for me to observe and talk extensively with stakeholders, to sit back and critically reflect on what was observed and said, and then to go back to them to learn more on the key themes and topics that emerged. These methods of inquiry, utilized during school observations and interviews with national policymakers alike, allowed me to map and analyze how perceptions on community participation differed across stakeholder groups, schools and communities, and levels of social organization (community, school, district, national, international), and how these perceptions and the differences among groups fostered or failed to foster support for the education of the OVSs.

This chapter begins with a summary of the major arguments made in the dissertation, followed by a discussion of the "black boxes" that I have opened up from the research concerning OVSs, community, participation, and schooling in international and national development discourses; the theoretical contributions of the dissertation; general recommendations to the international, national and community stakeholders; and future research plans.

Summary of chapters

In this dissertation, community participation has been presented as one of the centerpieces of current international development discourses for how to help Africa, and

much of the developing world, survive and flourish. Across areas of intervention, from HIV/AIDS to education to food security, international development discourse focuses on how communities can come together to overcome long odds with few external resources (World Bank, 1986; Jimenez & Paqueo, 1996; Heneveld & Craig, 1996; Mayoux, 1995; Pailwar & Mahajan, 2005). Furthermore, education continues to be conceptualized by many development actors as the key institution and intervention through which all children will grow their human capacity and secure their (and thus their country's) wellbeing and development. This is particularly true for OVCs, whose future wellbeing is viewed as even more dependent on schooling, than for children coming from two-parent families.

This conceptualization of the power of community participation hinges on the assumption that schooling will serve the needs of marginalized students, which is in turn tied to the assumption that community participation in OVCs' schools and their lives will assure that their needs are known and met. However, there are varied interpretations attached to concepts like community, participation, and orphan and vulnerable children by diverse stakeholders.

In order to map the meanings of community participation as perceived by different stakeholders and, at the same time, understand how community participation affected OVSs schooling and support, the research had to engage in a multi-sited, comparative study design that enabled a richer and more critical interpretation of the data. A critical ethnographic framework presented itself as the appropriate methodology, as it allowed for the problematization of taken-for-granted beliefs, norms, and practices that (re)produce inequity (Ball, 1994), and it emphasized thick description of daily

cultural and social practices so as to accurately describe and analyze the observed social actions and assign purpose and intentionality to these actions (Denzin, 1989; Ponterotto, 2006). The research was situated in the field of comparative and international education, both in its deliberate comparative research design, which recognized the power of comparison to yield new insights, and in its engagement with key concepts and arguments that dominate in the field of international development education, and that are regularly discussed and debated by comparative and international education scholars.

Malawi was presented as a particularly important site in which to examine the utility and consequences of current international development organization (IDO) discourse and programming that assumes that schooling and community participation will assure the future wellbeing of OVCs for a number of reasons: Firstly, Malawi is facing a lot of the challenges that are considered central to 21st century development in Africa: high AIDS rates, climate change, rapid environmental degradation, high disease burdens for malaria and other diseases, very high poverty rates, limited natural resources, rapid urbanization, and rapid educational expansion, which IDOs relate to the "problem" of OVCs and the "solution" of community participation and schooling. Secondly, Malawi has historically strong extended family and clan structures and traditional governance systems that IDOs, the government, and many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) rely upon in their arguments for the benefits and necessity of community participation in the lives of OVCs (World Bank, 2010). Thirdly, community participation is central to the OVC and CDSS policies in Malawi, hence providing a rich environment for study as the two fields commingle. Lastly, the study of secondary school OVSs has received little scholarly attention, and the relationship between

community participation and the success or lack of success of marginalized children like OVSs in secondary schools, particularly CDSSs, remains unexplored. There are wheels and levers required for community participation to successfully support the education of OVS in CDSS. A careful analysis of what is needed for OVSs schooling, definition of community and community participation would go a long way in supporting the OVSs. Just as with Free Primary Education, Malawi was at the forefront of expanding secondary school access on the continent, and so the country's experience can be of great value to other countries (e.g., Uganda, Kenya) that are more recently beginning such expansion and unveiling the wheels and levers of community participation and education of OVSs.

The dissertation research began with an examination of the definitions of community participation in government and IDO policies and discourse, most of which can be classified as drawing on hyper-community participation discourse. Hyper-community participation scholarship advocates community participation for efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and democracy. It assumes that communities are coherent, cohesive, and harmonious.

The rhetoric of official policy was analyzed in light of a range of critical and poststructural studies that do not take for granted the assumed links between decentralization, economic efficiency, and equity that underlie IDO and government discourse. Instead, they represent what I call community participation skeptics and community participation transformation scholars. Community participation skeptics argue that community participation does not lead to the results advocated by hyper-community scholars, as communities do not necessarily function harmoniously or

homogeneously, and because community participation is a rarity and at times members do not engage in it of their free will. Community participation transformation scholars problematize the notion of community participation itself and destabilize assumptions about the definitions and functioning of these concepts. This scholarship contends that people who participate in community-level education reforms do so in diverse contexts, from multiple positions, and with different motives. By engaging the rhetoric of policy with the realities of daily practices, transformation scholarship allowed for the exploration of community participation in existing contextual factors in the two research sites. I interrogated participants on how community members came to learn of, interpret, and act upon current official discourses of community participation and their calls for increased community responsibility for secondary schooling and OVSs in Malawi. Through these discussions, the members reflected on what was happening in their area in regard to supporting OVSs and provided their understanding on how they best thought OVSs could be supported. It provided an opportunity to question and transform ways of conducting themselves towards supporting OVSs.

The dissertation's engagement with the above mentioned strands of research/theorizing is important for making sense of when, how, and why community participation is evident in international and national development discourses, when and how it enters into development programming and funding, and what the effects of these points and modes of entrance might be on OVCs' lives. The study was thus guided by insights from all the three strands, but especially from community participation skeptics and community participation transformation scholars. The research design was, in turn, framed in relation to these critical and poststructural literatures on participation, which

meant that the research had to explore who gets to participate in community-level education reforms across different contexts and how different groups of actors understand the idea of participation, their roles and responsibilities in the provision of care for OVCs and quality education, and the settings in which these reforms are enacted.

The multi-sited comparative study design aimed at interrogating the meaning of community, community participation, and orphans and vulnerable children from various stakeholders' perspectives at the local, national, and international level. The main question addressed was how such concepts are understood and practiced at the local level in furthering or not furthering support for orphaned and vulnerable children, thereby leading to either the enhancement of access and persistence in CDSSs. Purposive selection of the research sites hinged on diversifying the sites according to certain characteristics, namely, kinship practices that may have a bearing on inheritance and community members' participation; the number of orphaned children in the districts; and enrollment rates of orphaned and vulnerable students in district CDSSs. The research utilized semi-structured interviews, informal interviews, participant observation and other observations, focus group discussions, and document analysis to collect data from the two sites.

The data collected from Londola and Mabuti CDSSs indicated that CDSSs were actually established in Malawi through various routes, as much as their establishment was supposed to be through community participation. The implications for these different forms of establishment on how they are run and managed, and the consequences on the support and schooling of the OVSs, was fully explored in Chapters

4 and 5 of this study. This analytical narration also clarifies that, even if the CDSSs had been fully formed through a more community-based process, the engagement of a broad range of community members in CDSSs is always unstable, given the small percentage of students from each village who attend school, and given the high school fees that these students pay. Community members who initially showed willingness to participate in Londola and Mabuti CDSS lowered their level of participation after the schools were established and students were selected to attend. Certainly, the comparison of the two schools indicates that it is possible to keep a wider or a smaller range of community members participating in the school, but either way, historical practices concerning government support for secondary schools, the payment of high fees to attend, and often the long distances between villages and the CDSS all make it difficult to maintain a wide base of community participation.

On the other side, the study also examined if and how communities see it as their responsibility to participate in the education of OVSs from their village. A description of daily lives at home and at school provided a glimpse into how the OVSs' schooling is affected by the relations and environments in which they live. This detailed account showed that shifting social practices like from altruism to strong reciprocal altruism that have contributed towards an individual focusing resources and investment in one's own children, and weakened supporting fabrics / kinship, both work against broad community participation in OVSs lives and education. The participants lamented the destruction of the social fabric (rules of kinship) due to the introduction of the "tables," changes in leadership, gender relations, family relations, the wider social structure including chiefs, church and material realities. While there are differences between

matrilineal and patrilineal areas (with matrilineal areas generally providing more support for OVSs, though also these areas tend to be poorer), in both cases there is a visible decline in support being offered to OVCs. Care patterns for OVSs often no longer follow the traditional patrilineal / matrilineal formations.

The issue of identity and belonging of the OVCs is also discussed, showing how community perceptions of who an OVC "belongs to" can change. For example, at one point OVCs are viewed as belonging to the community, at other times they are viewed as belonging to a certain organization and yet at other times they are viewed as belonging nowhere. This lack of belonging, or fear that soon they will not belong (for example, if a grandparent dies), dreams about their glistening future available only through schooling, their ability to shoulder the daily grinds that they face, their social networks, and the role models and financial and moral support provided through different venues seem to be some of the driving forces for OVSs' persistence and achievement in school. In addition, I examined the gendered nature of support for OVCs, including what types of jobs are viewed as acceptable or as necessary for girls versus boys, who is viewed as an appropriate role model for OVSs (and the strong role played by grandmothers in this), and how social expectations limit with whom they can interact around school work and whom they can ask for other forms of support.

Finally, the research also examined the processes that are utilized by external organizations in supporting the OVSs (such as individually-targeted bursaries) that end up setting boundaries that lead to further marginalization of the OVSs. The research explored the gendered nature of these support structures as well, showing how the forms of the material support provided by these organizations were the forms of support that

girls needed, but the method by which support was provided (individualized) resulted in even greater precariousness for girl orphans if they were seen as no longer belonging to the community, as they had fewer other ways to survive than male orphans.

Categorical black boxes: OVCs, community, participation, and schooling in international and national development discourses

The dissertation has revealed a number of areas that seem to be glossed over when scholars, government, non-governmental organizations, and development partners think about OVCs, community, participation, and schooling. Firstly, the definitions used by national and international actors are generally not critical of the concept of community in that they assume that communities are cohesive and singular units in which relations of power do not play a central role. In contrast to such definitions, a number of scholars have critiqued these conceptualizations and argued that definitions of community must take into account social, economic, and cultural power dynamics that exist among any group of people and that have direct bearing on the cohesiveness and functioning of the group (Cornish & Ghosh, 2007; Friedemann-Sanchez, 2006; Mansuri & Rao, 2004; & Pryor, 2005).

International and national responses to the increasing numbers and needs of OVCs have generally not taken these critiques of community into account. This has resulted in programs and policies that, on the one hand, do not explicitly address power dynamics existing in the community and, on the other hand, may not know the power issues that are there. This approach to conceptualizing OVCs and their needs continues, despite the wide range of studies that have shown that communities do not work as expected by hyper-community theories, and that individualized approaches to supporting

OVCs negatively impacts OVCs (Waal, Edstrom & Mamdani, 2008). Power analyses would be an important aspect to include in most "community" programs. The valuation of orphan and vulnerable children's support need to take into account the kinship system and the occurring changes in Malawi in order to run successful OVSs support programs.

Secondly, the dissertation highlights the multiple definitions by different groups of people of what is community and who comprises community, and the fact that community is now changing. These can be summarized into three different definitions: 1) whether or not people living in the community whose families did not originate from the area were recognized as part of the community; 2) whether or not people who were born in the village but did not currently live there were recognized as part of the community; and 3) whether or not Western-style organizations and their staff and resources were considered part of the community. Funding and governance bodies consistently included a broad definition of community that included one or more of these groups. This led them to believe that communities were stronger and had more resources. However, community in the west is not tied to kinship while in Malawi it is bound by kinship and has an element of reciprocity. On the other hand, villagers in each area consistently did not include these other groups in their definition of community, which shrinks the definition particularly as relates to members of the community who might not have more resources. Lastly, the parents and students perceived the government and non-governmental organizations as defining community in terms of "primitive poor people from the village who are not intelligent, do not know much and are not capable of contributing anything towards the school except labor" (molding bricks and hauling sand). This adds another dimension to understanding the diverse

opinions regarding who and what constitute community participation according to various actors.

Thirdly, the dissertation has expanded the potential meaning of participation from the participants' views i.e. being just present at a forum without actively taking part in debates or discussions. The connotation being that even if someone does not speak during the discussions, as long as he /she is present means is in agreement with any proceedings that took place. The existing power dynamics due to culture leaves those in marginalized positions like girls, boys and women in a disadvantaged position as they are usually expected to remain quiet in deliberations and let men do the talking and come up with a decision. When decisions are made during such meetings, they are said to have been made by everyone including the women, girls, boys, as long as they were present even if they said nothing during the meeting. It can be said that who gets to participate in community level education differs by context i.e. how they understand the idea of participation, roles and the settings.

Such varying interpretations of community seem to have an effect on the way the OVSs are being supported in the CDSSs. The development literature generally supports the view that community participation empowers OVSs and improves the welfare and care of OVSs, including their education, but it fails to pinpoint how exactly this comes about and articulate how the cohesion of community structures has been affected by the changing perceptions and interpretations the various stakeholders have on community and on participation, which is in turn deeply affected by changing social, cultural and economic factors.

Theoretical contributions of the dissertation

This dissertation makes theoretical contributions to studying policy and community participation policy in particular. It emphasizes the need to focus on the meanings, understandings, and perceptions attributed to concepts including community, participation, OVCs, and community participation in education by the various stakeholders.

Utilizing a critical interpretivist approach, and grounded in the research findings from Londola and Mabuti CDSSs, the dissertation brings another dimension of community into the picture and puts into question the definition that the government of Malawi, non-governmental organizations, and other IDOs utilize in defining community as "a group of people who have something in common and will act together in their common interest" (UNAIDS, 1997, p. 763). Such an approach reveals the unintended consequences of the hyper-community participation framework that shapes current international and national policy and programs and that can negatively or positively affect the very people it planned to support, and in this case study, OVSs at CDSSs. For instance, looking at the support provided to the CDSSs and to OVSs by people in Londola and Mabuti, the research suggests that the definition of community in relation to secondary education has, in practice, grown to encompass only the nuclear families of the students who are attending the CDSS, leading to shrinking of the perceived composition of the community that will support OVSs and the community that will support the CDSSs.

A critical interpretivist approach provides opportunities to explore how intended beneficiaries of community participation-focused initiatives interpret and practice

official discourses of community participation, that is, how they are represented in the realities of daily practices. This cannot be captured through conventional policy studies.

The dissertation also contributes to the international development education field since community participation is being advocated by international, national, regional, and local education authorities as a key mechanism through which to provide education to all, particularly to marginalized students (Heneveld & Craig, 1996). These calls for community participation have been translated into community participation policies and programs that assume community participation, but there has been less work done to understand the consequences in daily practice of these assumptions and translations. Critical, interpretivist approaches and critical and poststructural positions allow us to see how policies are understood and obligated by interrogating existing social relations, issues of power, and institutionalized contradictions related to participation in education in the communities (Elliot, 2009; Wandel, 2001; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000).

General recommendations

There are many policy facets to community participation that the government of Malawi and IDOs need to consider as they create policies and programs aimed at improving access, persistence and achievement in school for OVCs. Firstly, any program whose central design hinges on community participation needs to critically examine how various terms, including "community", "participation", and "orphan", are understood by the intended beneficiaries so as to avoid having community participation requirements, processes, or programs (or lack thereof) marginalize or disempower some community members (particularly OVCs and their caregivers). An understanding of how various

modes of economic, social, and cultural practices interact to increase injustices in the name of community participation and what needs to be done to transform the policies or practices that may increase injustice is crucial. From both research sites, participants expressed contradictions on what was meant by community and what support was to be rendered by the community and individuals to the OVSs. The results of these differing expectations were often that OVSs simply received very little, and when present, highly individualized support from a small number of actors or institutions.

Secondly, if community participation is going to be utilized by NGOs, government, and IDOs as a key mechanism to support OVSs, these groups need to come up with supporting frameworks that will deal with the process of identifying OVSs, the type of support to be provided, and how to deliver such items to the OVSs without invading their privacy and demeaning their status or disturbing the current relations of dependence on which OVCs depend for survival. For instance, following up the status of a child from birth through birth certificates to the time they are in primary school up to the time when they get selected to secondary. Such historic data would enable the concerned stakeholders that need to help easily identify such children that have lost a parent or both. It would also be easy to track such children through such recorded data. In order to mitigate against stigma and marginalization at the place where the OVS stays, it would be ideal to assess the home where the OVS stays to establish the prevailing needs of the family so that any support being provided is given according to the context of the needs i.e. proving support that would not end up marginalizing the OVS. The development of such supporting works must thus be done in order to stabilize OVSs survival and belonging currently, while also dealing with future needs and desires

for what OVSs describe as independence. Most participants, including the OVSs, in the research expressed dissatisfaction in how the community was engaged in identifying OVSs and the provisions being made to the OVSs; and narrated the further stigma and marginalization that faced the OVSs after receiving such support.

Recommendations to Malawi and the communities

According to the NESIP (2008), priority 3 on Governance and Education Delivery under community participation, it is stated: to "establish Community Day Secondary Schools in accordance with the provisions on the devolution of education to local authorities." While I do not dispute the need for community participation in CDSSs, from the research findings on establishment of CDSSs in both research sites, it is critical to define "community" and take into account what the people from the areas surrounding the place where the CDSSs are to be located perceive themselves to be or think they are thought of by government and NGOs. Such perceptions have a great influence in their willingness to support CDSSs. Again, while the notion of community participation has the good intentions of increasing accessibility and persistence of all children, including OVSs, in CDSSs, in the two field sites this notion only worked during the establishment of the CDSSs but thereafter became a barrier to achieving the intended outcomes as the community in practice shrank to mean only those parents/guardians who have children at CDSS. In response to this shrinkage, the school increased the fees that it levied against those who did attend, and for OVSs, this often meant the end of their school careers. It is therefore important to consider carefully the support that is needed by the CDSSs from external (not community) actors so that the

parents/guardians of those who are attending are not overburdened by the costs of running and developing the school primarily through development fees levied against parents/guardians of students.

CDSSs were created to greatly expand access to secondary school; however, the students who attend CDSSs are given many fewer resources than those who attend elite government schools. Since the students who attend elite government schools are more likely to come from urban primary schools and more elite families, this means that the government continues to systematically subsidize "traditional", better-off secondary school students instead of providing the basic support to CDSSs that would make it possible for poorer, rural students to attend secondary school without paying overly burdensome fees. Alternatively, CDSSs and elite government schools alike could create sliding scale fee systems for OVSs and other deeply marginalized children, so that fees in either school system did not predetermine who could gain a secondary school qualification. Such a system would remove the stigma of individual bursaries going to only a percentage of OVSs in each community by creating instead a system visible only to the head teacher of different fees for students.

There are issues beyond the cost of school fees that must be addressed for OVSs' success, however. Stigmatization by teacher can best be dealt with through teacher trainings. OVSs, most of whom are traditionally in the hands of the grandparents, fail to thrive in education when their guardians are themselves struggling in deep poverty and when many of the OVSs are subtly robbed of their identity and of their family inheritance. Chiefs, parents, teachers and other stakeholders, including the NGO community, are better placed not only to address deeply entrenched issues affecting

OVSs' secondary education, they are equally best suited to the task of jointly identifying the OVSs, monitoring the support being provided to the OVSs, and eliminating further marginalization of these students. However, as Pryor (2005) hints, community participation hinges on the existence of strong leadership and the lack of such leadership leads to minimal, undesirable, or no participation. The chiefs in Londola and Mabuti complained about their lack of authority due to democracy. In the process of improving governance, transparency, and accountability, the government of Malawi has disempowered the chiefs who previously were responsible for policing and overseeing basic governance in the village. The shrinking of power and authority of leaders in the rural area has negatively affected the support that the OVSs can receive through mechanisms of community participation. There is need for the government of Malawi to look into issues of how they can best empower the chiefs in the villages if community participation is to produce the intended results when it comes to supporting OVSs students schooling in CDSSs.

Thirdly, in line with NESIP strategy, the government of Malawi outlined that it will enhance learning opportunities for disadvantaged groups through targeted interventions, including the provision of bursaries for needy and gifted students. While such support to the OVSs is greatly appreciated by the OVSs and their guardians, support towards the OVSs and their schooling needs to be carefully crafted to avoid further stigmatization and marginalization of the OVSs. A carefully developed OVSs school support framework should take into account the age, identity, and belonging of each OVS. This would include the place of residence of the children, which had some implication on the resources that were available to them and their belonging and how

that affected their education and the support they received. Traditional, cultural, economic, gender, and environmental factors play a significant role on the above mentioned parameters, hence they need to be considered when coming up with such frameworks. The education of the OVSs is influenced by a complex set of structural, behavioral and economic factors. The OVSs and their guardians need to be placed at the center of education policy, programming and strategic interventions that affect OVSs education. Support for OVSs must also be crafted so as to maintain current forms of dependence on which OVSs depend for survival, while at the same time providing the stable support they need to continue their education and the development of the personal and social tools they will need for their future independence (their stated dream). The need to work out policies and strategies that will support the OVSs' education is critical because of the large numbers of OVCs in Malawi. For instance as of 2010, nearly 17% of children under the age of 18 were considered to be orphaned or vulnerable while 26% of all Malawian children among the age of 15-17 were orphaned, i.e. had lost one or both parents. Further, 8% of children under age 18 were paternal orphans (their father is dead but their mother is alive); 3% of children under age 18 were maternal orphan (their mother is dead but their father is alive) and 3% of children under age 18 were double orphan (both their father and mother are dead) (Malawi Demographic Survey, 2010).

Future research plan

There is need to conduct an in-depth, mixed-methods, longitudinal study to identify the often complex relationships between forms of OVS support, kinship and economic, social, cultural, and material relations in which OVSs and their guardians

live. The study should link these relations to forms of support for schooling of OVSs, and outcomes including persistence, absenteeism and achievement in school, and post-school outcomes. Such research could leverage the insights gained from careful ethnographic research that raises a set of new questions about what influences OVSs' outcomes (that is, research that questions the hyper-community participation assumptions of current approaches) to provide the larger-scale data that GoM and IDOs often require to guide any possible individual, organization and government that intend to provide support to the OVSs and to CDSSs.

An important question for further investigation is whether the peers that the OVSs find themselves attached to (that is, those who are in a similar situation, due to the grouping created by the NGOs through their current forms of support) motivate them to further advance their education. I did not look into this area thoroughly but find sufficient support in the data to warrant further research on this crucial question. This is particularly important since NGOs and IDOs are likely to continue with the current funding patterns, at least in the short term. Given this, how can these created identity groupings be used to try to strengthen, instead of weaken, OVSs educational achievement? For example, most students felt that the financial and counseling support provided was very vital for their education even though some fellow students at times ridiculed them whenever they were utilizing what was given by the organization. Is there a way to strengthen what is working about current models, while lessening the negative effects?

There is also a need to conduct a research on how best to provide support to the OVSs while trying to balance between transparency and accountability issues and

maintaining the privacy and dignity of the OVSs. The interviews with the organizations revealed that the organizations are caught between two worlds – the demands by funders for "transparency and accountability" under so-called good governance policies, and the right to privacy of the OVSs. Despite the reality of this struggle, it was also evident that many of the organizations' staff members are not particularly concerned about recognizing and attempting to limit invasions of the students' privacy. The students that felt the experience they went through when receiving the items was demeaning stated that they were working hard in school so that they can avoid this situation of receiving free things from organizations and being ridiculed by their peers. Improved programming and outcomes for OVSs will require that their experiences, dignity, and improved wellbeing be placed at the center of local, national, and international frameworks for their educational support.

These directions for further research indicate the importance of critically-informed, participatory approaches to research. They also suggest that rethinking programming and conducting more bottom-up evaluation are very promising avenues for achieving a refocused approach to assuring the education and life wellbeing of all children in Malawi.

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Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview protocol for all students

1. Could you tell me more about your educational background?
2. What are the reasons behind you wanting to get educated?
3. How do you support yourself when it comes to education?
    a) Are there times when you rely on other people or organization for educational support?
    b) Are there other students who do rely on other people or organizations for educational support?
    c) What are the different reasons why some students may need help from others?
4. How would you define the word community? Can you tell me the people that you think make up a community?
5. How would you define the word community? Tell me the people that you think make up a community.
6. How do you think some people in your area define the word community?
7. How do you think the government officials like district education managers define community? What about and non-government officials, how do you think they define community?
8. How do you understand by the name Community Day Secondary School (CDSS)?
9. How are such secondary schools (CDSSs) established?
10. Who in the community are the most important people for establishing Community Day Secondary School?

11. Can you tell me any activities that take place at Community Day Secondary School? Who are the people that take part in any Community Day Secondary School activities?
12. How does the community support the CDSS? Tell me how each member you have mentioned about that comprise the community support the CDSS?
13. How would you define the word orphans?
14. How do community members define the word orphan?
15. Is the definition of orphan used by government and NGOs working in the community different than the definitions used by the community?
16. What support, if any, is given to secondary school students considered orphans by the community? How is that support given to the students?
17. What support, if any, is given to secondary school students considered orphans by the government? How is that support given to the students?
18. What support, if any, is given to secondary school students considered orphans by the NGOs? How is that support given to the students?
19. What support, if any, do you think should be given to secondary school students considered orphans by the community, government or the NGOs?
20. What type of support, if any, have you ever received from the community? Government? NGOs?
21. If you had received any support, can you explain to us how that support was given to you? Do you think such a support had any influence on your education outcomes at secondary school? How?

22. What support do you think will be appropriate to make a greater influence on your secondary school education? Who do you think should provide such a support? How should that support be provided?

Appendix 2: Semi-structured interview protocol for all other participants

1. How would you define the word community? Tell us the people that you think make up a community.
2. How do you think some people in your area define the word community?
3. Do you think this definition is the same as defined by government and non-government officials like district education managers, NGOs working in your area?
4. How do you understand by the name Community Day Secondary School (CDSS)?
5. How are such secondary schools (CDSSs) established?
6. Who in the community are the most important people for establishing Community Day Secondary School?
7. How does the community support the CDSS? Tell us how each member you have mentioned about that comprise the community support the CDSS?
8. How would you define the word orphans?
9. How do community members define the word orphan?
10. How do government officials define the word orphans? How do NGOs working in your area define the word orphan?
11. What support, if any, is given to secondary school students considered orphans by the community? How is that support given to the students?
12. What support, if any, is given to secondary school students considered orphans by the government? How is that support given to the students?

13. What support, if any, is given to secondary school students considered orphans by the NGOs? How is that support given to the students?
14. What support, if any, do you think should be given to secondary school students considered orphans by the community, government or the NGOs?
15. What type of support, if any, have you ever received from the community? Government? NGOs? **[For guardians with whom orphan secondary students stay]**
16. If you had received any support, can you explain to us how that support was given to you? Do you think such a support had any influence on the student's educational outcomes at secondary school? How? **[For guardians with whom orphan secondary students stay]**
17. What support do you think will be appropriate to make a greater influence on the students' secondary school education? Who do you think should provide such a support? How should that support be provided? **[For guardians with whom orphan secondary students stay]**

Appendix 3: Basic quantitative survey tool

Name of student		**Form**	
Age			
No. children in the family		**Person staying with**	
Sex (Male/Female)		**Position in class last term**	

1. Before you came to this secondary school, where were you?
2. Have you ever received external support for your education this academic year?
3. If yes, what type of support was this?
4. If yes, who provided for such support?
5. If you were given a chance to get support for your education, what kind of support would you need? (Mention them according to priority)
6. You have heard about some students losing their parents, what support do you think they need most? (Again, mention according to priority) and why do you think they need such support?